

Theology

T H E

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C A S E

JAMES SMITH,

LATE MINISTER at NEWBURN,

AND OF

ROBERT FERRIER,

LATE MINISTER at LARGO,

TRULY REPRESENTED AND DEFENDED.

EDINBURGH:

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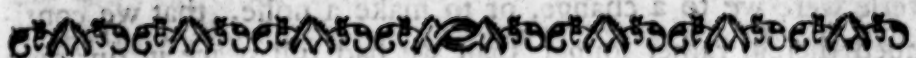
M DCC LXVIII.

INTRODUCTION.

WE, who subscribe the ensuing Representation, being fully persuaded that our change of views and conduct, with respect to some particulars therein mentioned, is well founded, have presumed to lay a fair and genuine account of our case before the public, with a view better to inform those who somehow have misapprehended the same, and to correct the gross misrepresentation which others have given thereof: for the lying spirit, in whom there is no truth, hath exerted himself in a very particular manner, by his lying instruments, in opposition to the measure which we have found it our indispensable duty to take.



THE



THE CASE OF

JAMES SMITH late minister at Newburn,
and of ROBERT FERRIER late minister
at Largo, truly Represented and De-
fended.

BEFORE we were put into the ministry in the church of Scotland, we, as do all others in like circumstances, subscribed the formula of that church, declaring thereby, That we believed the whole doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith to be the truth of God, founded upon, and agreeable to the word of God; and that the government of the church by kirk-sessions, presbyteries, provincial synods, and general assemblies, is founded upon, and agreeable to that word.—Our views at that time were such as we judged it our duty so to subscribe; but since then, we have gradually, and especially more lately, received other views of that matter: candor, therefore, and honesty called upon us, we thought, to retract our said subscriptions, resign our ministerial charge, and renounce the living and benefice thereunto annexed; as, without that subscription, we could not have been in connection either with the charge or with the benefice.

We can sincerely say, our regard for the people, over whom we had been appointed overseers, was such, that most willingly would we have continued in that office, could we

have done it with a good conscience toward God; yea, so averse were we to a change, or to make a noise, that we continued therein rather longer than we had full peace in our own minds: We also were not so insensible even to temporal interest, as, for what we accounted a matter of small moment, to have renounced so convenient and so liberal a living as we were in possession of, without any prospects as to this world, unless perhaps the voluntary contribution of a few Christians, mostly in but narrow circumstances, of whom we never sought, nor have, nor would have accepted any other security than their love to the truth. But the holding a living however convenient, however liberal, and by a tenure however sure, at the expense of giving up any truth of God, or of professing otherwise than we think in our hearts, we were and are of opinion, would have been in itself base, and in a particular manner displeasing unto him who is the Lord God of truth, Psal. xxxi. 5. and who desires truth in the inward parts, Psal. li. 6. We endeavoured therefore to renounce with cheerfulness, for we dare not resist, but must yield when the truth strikes, let the consequences be what they will.

We are ready to acknowledge, that the above Confession of Faith appears to us, as to the most part thereof, to be one of the best human collections or compositions that we have seen, that it contains many most precious and important truths; and that, in our view, it is mostly founded upon the word of God: but, according to what knowledge we have now received of that word, we cannot say that every part of that Confession, or that the whole doctrine thereof, is the truth of God: we think *that* rather too much to say of any human composition, consisting of such a multiplicity of doctrines as doth that Confession.—As to our particular exceptions, we think it could serve no good purpose to declare them, unless we at the same time attempted to justify them in a proper and particular manner, which would lead into a very prolix reasoning: we have therefore chosen not to enter upon it, at least for a time, unless it shall be found that circumstances make it necessary to be more explicit*.

We are firmly, and we hope invariably, persuaded, that

* See Appendix.

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the word of God, contained in the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him, Psal. xix. 7. &c. ; 2 Tim. iii. 16. ; 2 Pet. i. 19. ; Eph. ii. 20. to set it aside, or to substitute any other rule or directory in its stead, or to bring any other upon a level with it, would be most presumptuous, and at the same time most dangerous, this being the alone infallible light and shining in a dark place, he who commits himself to the guidance of any other, must walk in darkness and lose his way.

The authority of this word is the very highest that can be. It is his who speaks from heaven by his Son, his well beloved, Heb. i. 1. ; 2 Pet. i. 17. &c. compared with Matth. xvii. 5. He again speaks to men in these last days, in a particular manner by the writings of his infallibly inspired Apostles, who have explained the true religion and prediction of former ages, and have delivered faithfully what they received from him, This word therefore, must be in the strictest manner binding : it cannot, we think, be shewed that a dispensing power, as to any part of the Apostles doctrine, or a power to alter what they have taught and established, is granted unto any upon earth in any age. The scripture canon being closed, things are to stand and be observed as there stated, until Christ come, Rev. xxii. 18. 19. 20. and that which is the rule of conduct now, will be the rule of judgement at the last day, John xii. 58.

Such who think, of which sort we wish there may not be many, that the words of Christ, at least as to church-order, and the nature of his kingdom, not of this world, are not peremptory, or words strictly binding, but that men are at liberty to act as themselves think fit, notwithstanding of what he hath spoken, very consequentially follow custom, tradition, or whatever way is good in their own eyes, or in the eyes of others, of whose understanding and judgement they have conceived a preferable opinion. But we being very differently minded as to the majesty and authority of this Speaker, and as to the fitness, importance, and binding nature of whatever he hath spoken, find it our indispensable duty to hold fast every part of his good, gracious, faithful, and holy word as we can

understand it, conforming thereto in belief, disposition, and practice, as we can attain through the help of grace.

This precious word teacheth, among other things, that Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, the Head over all things to the church, which is his body and fulness, and for which, in amazing love he gave himself, is to have a church on earth until he come again, Matth. xvi. 18. and xxviii. 20. This church is above all other things in this world the object of his regard; he *walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, holding the stars in his right hand*, Rev. i. 12. 13. 16. 20. and, among the many other ways of shewing this regard, he hath prescribed rules for its good government and order, as well knowing the absolute necessity thereof; which rules, in whatever light they may appear unto a certain sort of men, must be the wisest and the best adapted that was possible unto the ends of their appointment, namely, the promoting his religion and spiritual kingdom in the world; and therefore worthy of being in the most punctual manner observed. But some, either through inattention, not perceiving the prescribed order, or not pleased with it when perceived, have taken upon them to model the order of Christ's house or church, according to their own wisdom and pleasure; and in this product of human policy, many, either unwilling to take the trouble of a due enquiry and examination, or not duly sensible of the importance of the matter, do acquiesce.

Presbyterians do admit that there is a particular church-government and order settled in holy scripture, but contend, that it is by kirk-sessions, presbyteries, provincial synods, and general assemblies, which are commonly called *church courts*. This government and order, after a more exact inquiry into holy scripture than we had formerly made, we could not find to be taught there; but the more we searched, the more clearly we perceived another manner of order revealed therein: as therefore the attempt we have made to act agreeably to the light and views we received upon that head, hath been the occasion of some speculation, and at which some have taken no small offence, we propose to give the more attention thereunto, and to offer such defence of our conduct, as we judge to be necessary.

1. We could not find in the doctrine of the Apostles, who settled the order of the New-Testament churches, a classie presbytery, which is reckoned by some the radical court. The word *presbytery* we indeed found, 1 Tim. iv. 14. this, however, in our apprehension, was not a classis, but such a presbytery as was settled in every particular church or congregation. It is said of Barnabas and Paul, that, in course of visiting certain cities, where, with success, they had before preached the gospel, numbers being brought to the faith of Christ, Acts xiv. 1. 21. they, ver. 23. *ordained them elders in every church*, that is, in every *congregation*, for so the word means. The precise number of elders is not told, but it is reasonable to think it was in proportion to the number of members in the respective congregations; these elders were an eldership or a presbytery, which is a word of the very same meaning, as is well known: Such, therefore, must that presbytery have been, 1 Tim. iv. 14. for of no other do we read. But this is greatly different from a classis, or such a presbytery as obtains in the national church, or great secessions from it, which consists of all the preaching elders in all the congregations within a certain district, as stated members, and a ruling-elder as a moveable member half-yearly chosen and sent by each kirk-session, who constituting themselves into a court from time to time, do exercise jurisdiction, and the whole power of discipline, over all the congregations within that district, exclusively of every member of these congregations whatsoever: about such a presbytery, holy scripture appears to us to be totally silent; and we cannot help looking upon it as an usurped power in the house of God, and an incroachment upon the sacred rights of Christians, although the generality of professing Christians in this land, unacquainted, it would seem, with scriptural Christian rights, or not valuing them, and being inured to this yoke from their youth, not only submit, but shew themselves mighty fond thereof, and zealous for it.

2. We could find no kirk-session instituted or exemplified distinct from a congregational presbytery or eldership: if any think they see it, they may point unto the place, which will be very obliging.

3. We could not find any provincial synod of office-bearers

ers exercising jurisdiction over all the presbyteries, kirk-sessions, and congregations, within the province. We could not meet with any vestige thereof: nor,

4. Could we find what is called a general assembly, consisting wholly of delegates from presbyteries, royal burroughs, and universities, meeting under the eye of the King's Commissioner, who represents him; which assembly is called and dissolved by the King's authority; for, though their professing to meet and dissolve in Christ's name is connived at, no business is finished by them as an assembly, but in presence of the commissioner, who is also consulted as to the time of their next meeting. This is the supreme court and top of the subordination, judging and determining all causes from all inferior courts, affirming and reversing the sentences of these courts at their pleasure. It is the last resort, and its sentences final, without any obligation upon them to show, that they are agreeable to Holy Scripture. Every member of this court, even he who is chosen but perhaps by a casting vote in a civil society, hath a share in the jurisdiction over every minister and member of the national church; whose cause, even when respecting the most important spiritual concerns, may come before the court: we could not discover so much as a shadow of scripture precept or example for such an assembly, and of such powers; and we do think it absolutely indefensible.

5. As little could we find in any part of the apostolic system of New Testament church-constitution, either name or thing, what is called a church-court, i. e. a number of church-officers, either in one church and congregation, or belonging to more or many churches or congregations, constituting themselves into a meeting of jurisdiction, claiming and exercising the power of discipline over that or those congregations, exclusively and independently altogether of the members thereof; consequently could not find any fabric of such courts, nor any instance of reference or appeal from one court to another, nor any shadow of an affirming, reversing, or nullifying power: That order, though it seemeth good unto many, and is even boasted of, doth not appear to us to have seemed good unto the Holy Ghost; for the witnesses, infallibly inspired by him, in settling the order of the New Testament church, have taught

taught something very different, as we will afterward endeavour to shew. In the mean time, it is to be remarked, that, upon that very principle of exclusive power in those called *churchmen*, of which many are so fond, hath been founded all that oppression, acted by them in every age, than whom no sort of men have grasped more at power, or more abused it.

6. We could not perceive any institution of a church collective, *i. e.* a number of visible churches or congregations in a country or kingdom, united in some such way together, as to be denominated one church, as the church of Scotland, England, Holland, &c. The first Christian churches in every country or province where they were planted, are in no instance called the *church* of that province or country, but always *churches* there; as *churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus*, 1 Thess. ii. 14.; so churches in Asia, Achaia, Macedonia, Galatia. There never was any national church, that we read of in Scripture, but one; to wit, of ancient Israel: that church form is however dissolved, and is no more; a new one of a different sort is prescribed under the New Testament or new state of things, with respect to the church of God. Perhaps the denomination *church-collective*, or *national church*, is not taken from united congregations, but from united church-courts; but of such courts or such union among them we could, as hath been noticed, observe nothing in Scripture, as pertaining to the New Testament state. The above being the result of our inquiry and search, any one may see, that we could not continue to profess, that the government of the church by kirk-sessions, presbyteries, provincial synods, and general assemblies, is founded upon the Word of God: The Westminster assembly itself refused to say so of it, as did the Long Parliament also, whose advisers, in things pertaining to religion, that assembly was *.

We are sensible of what is pled in opposition to the above: As, 1. In support of classic presbytery, it is pled, That there were more churches or congregations than one in Jerusalem, in Ephesus, &c. and that the elders of those churches were a classis or presbytery. But this is *gratis dictum*, or an arbitra-

ry sentiment; for it cannot be shewed, that it is so written. It would be very strange, if there were several organized churches in these cities, that they never are in any instance so called; but in every instance, *church*, *i. e.* congregation, which is the true and more intelligible rendering of the Greek word, so translated; and that by an historian, who writes in a plain, distinct, and accurate manner, and who, in all countries of which he writes, where there were several churches and congregations, invariably calls them *churches*, and in no instance, *church*, Acts ix. 31. and xv. 41. and xvi. 5. After the same manner doth the Apostle Paul write, where he hath occasion to mention that matter, 1 Cor. xvi. 1. 19. 2 Cor. viii. 1. It appears certain, that, where there were churches, they were so called, and, where there was but one church, it was so called. These writers delivered what was truth and fact. If such freedom was to be taken with Scripture, as these interpreters use in this case, it would render the Scripture of very small use. The hypothesis of the opponents (for it is no other,) appears contrary to fact; it is founded in the greater number of converts in these places than, according to the supposition, could be or meet in one place? But this supposition is directly contrary to the historian's account of the Christians at Jerusalem, where their number was greatest, of whom he says, Acts ii. 44. (and he certainly knew better than do these opponents,) *they were together*: the same phrase is, in ver. 1. rendered *in one place*; and, though the word has sometimes a meaning somewhat different, but never contrary, yet it will not be denied, that this is the most common meaning and acceptation thereof. Again, all the church are said to be *with one accord in one place*, viz. Solomon's porch, chap. v. 11. 12. 13. At the chusing of deacons also, chap. vi. it is plain, the disciples were one body or church, were addressed as such by the Apostles, being convened before them, and called the whole multitude, vers. 5. had deacons settled among them, without the least hint of their being distributed among several congregations or churches. It is further to be observed, that, when the number of believers so increased, as they could not continue to assemble conveniently in one place, a persecution dispersed and scattered them, which, though not narrated because of the many inter-

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vening important particulars, which the historian was directed to write until chap. viii. yet it will not be denied, fell out not many months after the Pentecost effusion. Now, after the dispersion, we do not read of any extraordinary numbers brought unto the faith there: that church lay under many discouragements from the inveterate hatred of fellow-citizens and countrymen, and they were generally of the poorer sort; hence *the poor saints at Jerusalem*, Rom. xv. 26. As to the many thousand Christian Jews, mentioned Acts xxi. 20. they had assembled from many countries to the Jewish passover, the observance of the Jewish feast for a time being permitted unto them: for the word used by the historian expresseth a greater number, (many ten thousands,) than any one will alledge could belong to that church alone. It is more difficult to account for how the passover could be observed according to the manner; how such a vast concourse of people from all quarters, (in comparison of which the church at Jerusalem was a very small handful,) could have access to the priests in the short time to which they were limited, with the blood of the numberless lambs and kids, to have the same sprinkled at and upon the one altar of burnt-offering, 2 Chron. xxx. 16; yet no one questions the truth of the Scripture account; nor, to solve the difficulty, is it judged necessary to have recourse to the multiplying of altars of burnt offering, as the opponents are for multiplying of churches: nor would it have been satisfying, as it is always said *the altar of burnt offering*, and never *altars*; as in the present case it is always said *church*, and never *churches*.

— The plea, in favours of various congregations or churches in Jerusalem, taken from this, That otherwise there would not have been work for so many apostles and elders as were there, is very weak: we read of no elders there other than the Apostles, for several years after the effusion they officiated as elders, 1 Pet. v. 1. and they were not all constantly at Jerusalem: we find Peter passing through all quarters, Acts ix. 32.; at Joppa many days, vers. 43.; at Cesarea, Acts x. 24.; at Antioch, Acts xv. 35.; compared with Gal. ii. 11.; and, against the time that other elders were ordained, most of the Apostles had, in consequence of their commission, passed into other countries for spreading the everlasting gospel. James,

the Lord's brother, Cephas, and John, appear to have continued there longer indeed than others, Gal. i. 18. 19. Gal. ii. 9. ; James alone remained there, Acts xxi. 18. It is easy to see, from the opposition made by adversaries, and from the frequent returns of exercises of religion and devotion in that church, which it is allowed was numerous, there would be abundance of work for a considerable number of elders, and especially as instruction then about the grace of the gospel, and new state of things, was mostly oral, it being several years before any part of the New Testament was written, this made very much preaching and teaching necessary, Acts v. 42.

2. In support of the doctrine of church-courts, and of the exclusive power of churchmen, it is pled, 1. That such a court, and of such power, is intended, Matth. xviii. 17. *Tell it unto the church.* But this is a mere assertion : it cannot be shewed, that this word is of that meaning in any part of the New Testament ; and it would be very unnatural to understand it here as meaning any other society, than that to which the brothers mentioned did belong ; out of it the one or two were to be taken, but satisfaction not being received, the church, *i. e.* the whole body, was to be informed, having all of them a concern as to the behaviour of their brethren ; and a judgement, after hearing the case, being given by them, it was to be rested in. There is not a single word about elders only, or their exclusive power, or of carrying the matter from court to court : The word *brother*, used by Peter, vers. 21. is not to be restricted unto brother apostle or elder, unless none other could be supposed to sin against him, or be intitled to forgiveness from him, which was far from being the case : it is certain he used that word in a much larger sense, Acts ii. 29. and iii. 17. 2 Pet. i. 10. — 2. It is pled, there was such a church court at Antioch, and that it was a classic presbytery, for it laid on hands, Acts xiii. 1. 2. 3. But this is a sentiment entirely arbitrary ; for 1. There was only one church or congregation at Antioch ; it is no where said, that there was more than one there ; the prophets and teachers therefore could not be a classic presbytery, as is alledged. 2. There is not a word of their being constitute into a court exclusive, or that they acted in a court capacity. The contrary

trary is manifest; the Holy Ghost made his will known to them, when they were engaged in their ministerial work, which must have been among or to their flock, whose ministers they were, *vers. 2. As they ministered unto the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, &c.*; that this matter being transacted no otherwise than, in presence of the flock or church, their concern therein might appear. 3. This however was an extraordinary case; the Holy Ghost interposed therein in an extraordinary manner; so that the sending forth Barnabas and Saul is declared to be done, *vers. 4.* not by the prophets or teachers, or church, but by him.—In ordinary cases, it is certain, the members of that church possessed a right of judging in church-matters, along with the elders or prophets among them. It was the disciples there, and not the prophets and teachers only, who sent Barnabas and Saul with the contribution made there, for the relief of the brethren in Judea, when a dearth was foretold, *Acts xi. 28. 29. 30.* It was the brethren, members of that church, and not the prophets and teachers only, who determined to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem about the affair of the Judaizing teachers, *Acts xv. 1. 2. 3. &c.*; and it was to the whole members of that church, that the letter from the Apostles, and elders, and brethren, at Jerusalem, was sent, *Acts xv. 22. 23. 24. 30. 31.*; so then there is abundant evidence, that the prophets and teachers in that church were far from claiming that exclusive power, which numbers now, to support an hypothesis, do ascribe unto them. And in the present case, it was to the church, and not to the prophets and teachers only, for they are no way distinguished, that the two commissioners of the Holy Ghost, Paul and Barnabas to wit, made their report, *Acts xiv. 26. 27.*

3. The grant of the keys of the kingdom of heaven is urged, but very improperly, in favour of the exclusive power of the clergy, *Matth. xvi. 19.*; *John xx. 23.* For that grant plainly appears to have terminated in the Apostles. The gospel, which was committed unto them to preach, reveals, and opens heaven, or brings life and immortality to light. In the believing this gospel, possession thereof is obtained, but this gospel not believed, heaven remains shut, there is access no other way, *Mark xvi. 15. 16. Go ye into all the world, &c.*

The professing the faith of this gospel opens an entrance into the visible kingdom of heaven, or church of Christ in this world, Acts ii. 41. *They that gladly received his word were baptized, and added.* But, without that profession, Holy Scripture allows of no admission thereunto, 2 Cor. vi. 14. *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,*—No other gospel is to be preached, Gal i. 8. 9.; nor is any other discipline to be introduced into the church, but what the Apostles received of their divine Master, which they have taught, and which they practised, as there was occasion, Acts xx. 28.; 1 Cor. iv. 17.; 1 Cor. xi. 2. 34. Elders in no age have authority to teach or practise any new discipline; they have only power to preside and moderate, or lead in the church-meetings, which is the import of the word translated *rule*, and which is ascribed unto them, Heb. xiii. 7. 17. 24.: the other word so translated, 1 Tim. v. 17. is a word of much the like meaning in the judgement of the most skilful in that language; their ruling is not certainly of the lordly or masterly sort, 1 Pet. v. 3.; Matth. xxiii. 10.: they are, along with the church, to deliver their opinion, in applying the apostolic discipline unto the objects thereof; for this power is left with the whole church, as will be shewed; and when the church acts as they have taught, their sentence is declared by the Head of the church to stand ratified, Matth. xviii. 18.

4. The friends of the exclusive power of the clergy do, in support thereof, with great confidence bring Acts xvi. 4.: but their interpretation of that passage would render holy scripture inconsistent with itself, which it is never found to be when rightly understood. It should be attended unto, that, in Scripture, a reference unto, or a repetition of an historical fact, doth not always take in every circumstance in the original narration, and sometimes a circumstance is added, which was formerly omitted: instances of these sorts do abound, but it is to be noticed, that the fullest account is always strictly true, which, in the present case, we have in the preceding chapter, to which the historian refers, and which entirely overthrows the gloss of the opponents. It is plain, his intention in this last text was to distinguish the decrees, or to show what decrees were meant; and his mentioning the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem served that purpose sufficiently, without being

ing more explicit. Sure it could never be intended by him to contradict what he had but a very little before written.

III. The application from Antioch to Jerusalem Acts xv. is offered in defence of the subordination-scheme, and is almost the only scripture that is so. But it appears a very weak foundation whereupon to raise such a fabric as a kirk session, presbytery, provincial synod, and general assembly: For it is carefully to be remarked that this was not an application from one court to another, an inferior to a superior court, and so it can in no degree answer the purpose for which it is brought. It was an application from one church unto another, not as subordinated thereto, but upon a level therewith: it was to find out the truth in the openest manner, as to a very suspicious alledgance of those who came down from Jerusalem, their having the authority of the church there, for their teaching the necessity of keeping the law of Moses in order to be saved: and to bring the weight of a judgement of that church where were several apostles, and which Paul and Barnabas knew would be obtained, into the scale against that false doctrine, which, by the address of its promoters, was like to make impression. No one will dispute the propriety of a consultation among the churches that are christian in matters of difficulty, but as none of them can justly claim infallibility, they are at liberty, each church, to judge for itself, by the one infallible rule, as to the fitness and soundness of advice or counsel given. It is obvious the application from Antioch was free, it was of their own motion, Acts xv. 2. *they determined to send, &c.* The church at Antioch was every way as considerable as that at Jerusalem, having apostles in it as well as the other; was, 'tis like, as numerous, having this peculiarity, that believers in Christ there were first called by his name, received the new and honourable and distinguishing appellation, CHRISTIANS: that was also the first church that received believers indiscriminately into it, or of whatever nation, Jews or Gentiles. All the apostolic churches appear to have been upon a level in point of order, without any superiority taught, yielded, or claimed, each church or congregation being in an immediate way in subjection unto Jesus Christ as its sole superior and head, receiving laws from him only as delivered to them
by

by his apostles —The elders of the church of Ephesus were not directed by the apostle Paul to have recourse to superior courts in the views and times of danger, but unto *watchings*, and unto *God and the word of his grace*, Acts xx. 31, 32. These churches in like manner where he and Barnabas ordained elders, Acts xiv. 23. were only recommended by them *to the Lord in whom they believed*, without so much as a word about subjecting them to superiors. The seven churches of Asia were required, each church, to reform what was amiss in it, without the least hint concerning church-courts or subordination.—In that application to the church at Jerusalem, the apostles and elders are with propriety enough particularly mentioned, as being the most eminent and respectable members of the church, its office-bearers, having the leading or rule therein; and though they might very probably meet by themselves beforehand to deliberate about the matters of the church, yet that they, exclusively of the church-members, determined in this affair laid before them, is expressly contrary to what is written. The members were present at the time of debating the cause, in which they gave judgement, and it appears there were at first different sentiments among them, ver. 5. 7. for there was no difference among the apostles to cause any disputing among them. And it is not more clear that the elders spoke in the cause, than that some of the multitude or members did so; their keeping silence, ver. 12. at once shews they were present at the debate, and seems to imply their previous speaking. That they were allowed to join the apostles and elders in the judgement given, nothing is more clearly revealed; see ver. 22. 23. 25. 27. 28. it is a very strange thing to find any one presuming to call it in question; what can we be sure of as revealed, if this is not? And if the apostles themselves did allow the members to give a judgement along with them even in a matter of such importance, it is not easy to see by what authority ordinary elders take upon them to exclude every soul of them, and grasp all the power into their own hands, as if they were superior to the apostles themselves, this looks very like a lording it over God's heritage, which is expressly contrary to the commandment, 1 Pet. v. 3.—In the exercise however of this arrogated power, the elders of the national church are greatly encouraged by the members, their

not only very tamely giving up that power into their hands, which the Head requires his church-members to act in their own persons, but they are very angry with these who call upon them to claim their right, loving better to follow men implicitly, though but of like passions and weaknesses with themselves. So easy a matter is it to keep men in spiritual bondage, when they are once brought into it.—The judgement given by the church at Jerusalem was binding both upon themselves, and all the other churches to whose knowledge it came, and is still binding upon the churches, because it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, the certain knowledge of which they had some how imparted to them; for extraordinary intimations from the Holy Ghost, were not unusual in that day. But, as was noticed above, this affair cannot justly be applied unto a subordination of church-courts, with which it hath no business at all. In a word then, we read of officers both extraordinary and ordinary, or standing, given to the church by its Blessed Head; but of his giving consistories, courts, synods, and assemblies of them, to rule exclusively, we have not read.—It is with all readiness admitted, that the Presbyterial plan is a very well adjusted plan, discovering the great politic sagacity of its authors, and notably adapted unto a kingdom of this world, where civil rights may be, and are given up to lay a foundation for civil government: But it appears to us not suited unto that spiritual kingdom over which Jesus Christ doth reign; which is a free kingdom under its one glorious King, subjection to whose whole government and law, is true liberty, is freedom indeed: where the sacred, the precious, the spiritual rights are by no means to be given up unto any man whatsoever upon the one hand, nor are they to be invaded by any man or men upon the other, nor indeed can they be so with impunity.

We shall next mention some other things which carried an inducement in them to the step we have taken.

1. The manner of communion in the national church. Holy scripture most expressly forbids unequal yoking in church-fellowship, 2 Cor. vi. 14. *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what part hath he that believeth with an unbeliever?*

unbeliever? See 1 Cor. v. 7. ; 2 Thess. iii. 6. ; Heb. xii. 15. We found it upon trial quite impracticable, in connection with that church, to pay due regard to these and the like scriptures ; and were therefore inclinable to be disengaged, that we might be at liberty to conform more to what appears to us the scriptural order with respect to church communion, which we consider as of great importance in religion : and that we might be under less restraint in reducing to practice the whole instituted discipline in Christ's house, in connection with such as shall be found by us to be like minded.

2. We had not freedom to baptize every child born within the bounds of our respective parishes. The affair of sponsors we could not find authorised, and as it is generally managed, we look upon it as a piece of solemn mockery. We had only freedom to baptize the children of such, who, with some knowledge, professed soundness in the faith of Christ, and subjection unto him, a willingness to walk in all his plain commandments, and in all the plain ordinances and institutions in his house, as opportunity and circumstances did admit. But as numbers differed from us upon this head, which introduced heat and animosity, it contributed also to our being inclined to retire.

3. We came to think a national establishment not altogether unexceptionable. 1. We find nothing concerning it taught in the New Testament, nor was there any such thing for several hundred years after the Christian æra began. It is, we judge, a human, not a Divine, institution. 2. Although it may be thought to have its advantages, and is almost universally considered as a great privilege ; particularly as the ministers of the word have a very reasonable maintenance secured unto them, and the people are relieved from what most would count a heavy burden, namely, the communicating sufficiently to the support of their pastors. This, however, we find, is not the provision which the New Testament points unto and establisheth, 1 Cor. ix. 11. ; Gal. vi. 10. from which we were led to think, that it was not so well fitted for serving the ends of Christ's religion, else it would have been mentioned when that subject was in the apostle's eye. As to what is commonly, and with no small assurance alledged from Isa.

xliv. 23. *and kings shall be thy nursing fathers, &c.* we say, the New Testament doth not apply it unto that purpose for which it is brought; and we have no other medium but the New Testament, for understanding with any certainty what is the true meaning of Old-Testament prophecy delivered in figurative and emblematical terms. Whatever is the precise meaning of that text, the New Testament establishment is not to be dropped, that so Christians may have opportunity of shewing their subjection to the gospel of Christ, in contributing to the support of a gospel ministry. Kings and queens and great ones can do no greater favour to the church than to profess the faith of Christ, and to set a good example by living up to that profession, and to protect and defend Christians, whose faith obliges them to be good subjects, in the possession of their civil, but especially of what is their natural as well as religious right, that of worshipping and serving God according to their conscience: this would be a greater glory than the wearing a corruptible crown. 3. All legal or national establishments whatsoever, have been made at the expense of depriving Christians of the spiritual right of a free choice of their pastors or elders. This right, though of very great importance, intimately connected with the great and eternal concern is now much given up by those of the national church: the zeal of most professors, at least in our neighbourhood, is wholly employed about enjoying classic presbytery, and numerous gatherings, however promiscuous, to the Lord's supper, once or twice in the year or so: this being granted them, they appear well pleased, think themselves happy, and put up with such doctrine, and such other things as come to hand; their taste for the pure gospel not appearing very delicate. Indeed, the right of chusing their own pastors hath been but very partially contended for at any time by those in the establishment; and it must be owned, that their claim that way is but very weak, who are members of a church nationally established; membership therein, considering what the law is, implying in it a renouncing the right of free election, the privilege hath only been contended for in favour of the majority of heads of families, which is no other than attempting to establish a patronage somewhat extended, and is the depriving the much greater number of

church-members of a right equally belonging to them. 4. A church legally established is thereby incorporated with, or becomes a member of the state, or a creature of the civil government, consequently is of this world, and upon a separate basis from that spiritual kingdom which is not of this world. The sentences of the courts of the established churches are enforced by the coercive power of the secular arm, which hath no place in the spiritual kingdom. There is good authority for gathering men by the preaching of the gospel, out of the kingdoms of this world, into membership in Christ's church and kingdoms; but it is contrary to the highest authority, to make his kingdom or church a kingdom of this world, or to manage it according to the manner of such a kingdom.

Upon the above, and some other accounts, we became willing to stand upon another footing than a national establishment, although we were abundantly sensible that our outward provision would be very much diminished thereby. But elders, who are lovers of Christ, of truth, and of souls, will accommodate their manner of living to what their flock can conveniently afford, and be as little burdensome as possible; will not expect great things from a small church, especially when it is but in narrow outward circumstances; the members being bound only to give according to what they have, and not according to what they have not. Church-members who are sensible of the importance of the gospel, and so love it, will count it, not a burden, but a privilege, to contribute as they are able to the support of those who faithfully and in purity preach it, and do the other parts of the elders work; for those who do otherwise, are unworthy of being supported at all. The outward income of the apostles, who were unspeakably more useful than ever we can pretend to be, nay, of the Head himself, who in worthiness infinitely excels, appears to have been no other than the voluntary contributions of those who were not generally of the richer sort, and very possibly did not much exceed what 'tis possible we may receive. With what cheerfulness then, should we come into their fellowship, and be as they were in this world?

It will perhaps be said, that the rendering elders dependent upon the people for a living, will be a strong temptation to them

them in various instances to relax discipline. *Answ.* In churches of a different order, there might be some ground for so thinking, but when the true order of Christ's house is followed, this danger much vanisheth; because, there being an equal distribution of the power of discipline throughout the whole church, at least nothing being concluded without its consent, an elder, or the elders, will not have it in their power to relax the same, although he or they were so disposed. On the other hand, a real evil will be much prevented; elders will not so readily pour neglect or contempt upon their people, which hath in not a few instances obtained, when independent of them altogether in point of provision.

The above being our views, it appears clear, we could not, in a consistency with having a *conscience void of offence toward God and toward men*, retain either our charge or living. We accordingly gave up both. Every generous mind, every one, who hath experienced the feelings and workings of a tender conscience, must, we presume, approve. As to others, we are no way solicitous what they think or say: *our hearts in this matter condemn us not, and we have confidence towards God*, 1 John iii. 21.

In the good Confession which Jesus Christ witnessed before Pontius Pilate, John xviii. 36. 37. he asserted his royalty, and said he was a King, but that his *kingdom was not of this world*. We will therefore proceed very briefly to shew, what views we have received, by the revealing Word, of the nature of this his kingdom, and somewhat more largely of the manner of its external administration and order appointed by him, as connected with its nature.

I. *Of the internal nature of Christ's Kingdom not of this world.*

1. This kingdom is spiritual, is erected or set up in the spirits and hearts of men, Heb viii. 10. He, who is set upon the throne thereof to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, Isa. 9. 7. is *the Lord that Spirit*,
C 2 1 Cor.

2 Cor. iii. 17. All those of this kingdom are *born of water and of the spirit*, John iii. 5. 2. The subjects are originally of this world, and in a state of rebellion against heaven through sin, but being chosen out of it, for they are a *chosen generation*, 1 Pet. ii. 9.; they are gathered from among all nations of the earth by the word of truth, or gospel of salvation; *faith cometh by hearing* that word, Rom. x. 15. 16. 17. This word, revealing peace by Jesus Christ, *the Word made flesh*, revealing God well-pleased in him, finds them out; and being made to shine in their minds, that discovery is had of him who saves, and of his salvation, which gives them peace, sprinkles the heart from an evil conscience, and brings them into entire subjection to him alone as their King, 2 Cor. iv. 6; Rom. v. 1.; 2 Cor. viii. 5. In after-life they shew themselves to be no more of the world, by holding and professing that truth which gave them relief and peace at first, and gained their hearts to God their Saviour; by utterly renouncing all confidence in any thing whatever about themselves, placing all their hope in Jesus Christ, and the glorious work of righteousness finished by him; renouncing also the government of all other lords, the devil, world, flesh, *lust of the eye, of the flesh, and pride of life*; renouncing the dominion of men in matters of faith and religion, and cheerfully addressing themselves to the observance of the *all things whatsoever* their righteous, their only Saviour and Sovereign, *hath commanded*. While in this world, they continue connected with it in civil concerns, but, in those that respect religious fellowship and communion, they are a people that *dwell alone*, and are not *reckoned among the nations*, Gal. ii. 20.; Phil. iii. 7.; Gal. vi. 17.; Gal. v. 24.; Numb. xxiii. 9.—3. It is a kingdom of grace; the whole constitution thereof is a scheme of grace, glorious *grace*; divine *grace reigns* in it *through the righteousness* which is *by Jesus Christ*, Rom. v. ult. The whole subjects thereof hold their all, their great all, of grace, pure, free, rich, exceeding rich, and much more abounding grace; all sort of boasting is utterly excluded; all glorying is in the Lord alone, in whom they are justified. It is of him who is rich in mercy, and great in love; and as it is a kingdom of saved ones, so they are all *saved by grace*, Eph. ii. 4. &c. Rom.

iii. 24. ; and v. 20. 21. ; and xi. 5. 6 ; Tit. iii. 5.—4. It is a kingdom of truth : the subjects are begotten by *the word of truth*, James i. 18. *born of that incorruptible seed*, and nourished by that *sincere milk*, 1 Pet. i. 23. ; and ii. 2. It is founded upon that truth, which, as a rock, supports it, *Jesus Christ is the son of the living God*, Matth. xvi. 16. 18. ; *the beloved Son in whom he is well pleased*, and whom he requires to be heard, chap. xvii. 5. All the subjects hold this truth fast, love it most dearly, meditate habitually upon it, speak much of it, rejoice in and with it, offer their highest praises on the account of it. 'Tis their very life, they live by it, and upon it, could not spiritually subsist or act without it ; it dwells and abides in them, as may be seen throughout the whole scripture-account of it, with reference unto them. This is the truth to which he, who is *the Truth*, bore witness unto the death. They bear witness to the same truth, and are disposed to suffer any thing, rather than let it go, or any part of its connection. They who are not of this truth hear not Christ's voice, John xiii. 37. ; are not of his sheep, John x. 27. ; and so not of his fold or kingdom ; but are as really of the world, as those of whom Christ himself says, John viii. 23. *Ye are of this world, I am not of this world*. They love one another because of the love of this truth, which, taking in its connection, is common to them all. It is a kingdom of truth, as it truly and exactly answers to prophetic accounts of it ; for all the prophets spake of it, and of him who reigns over it. The law of it, which is spiritual, reaching to heart and conscience, and is contained in holy writ, is itself perfectly pure and holy, a true expression of the nature of its author ; teacheth and establisheth truth, simplicity, purity, integrity, justice, and uprightness, all of which have the nature of truth in them ; and the subjects, having this King reigning in their hearts by this law, are a kingdom of saints or holy ones, *a holy nation*. The particular visible communities are called *churches of saints*, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. ; and so he hath the name of *King of saints*, all whom he holds in his hand ; and, in a particular manner, the law of love leads, and prevails, in this kingdom. Love to their God and King is laid deep in every heart, and such pure fervent love to one another

another, as obtains not in any society on earth; being influenced by motives, that are entirely peculiar to them, and of the noblest kind, John xiii. 35. 39.; 1 Pet. i. 22.; 1 John chap. iii. iv. v.; 2 John; 3 John.—5. It is a kingdom of priests under the great High Priest upon the throne, who offer up, not bloody sacrifices, as under the law, but a holy priesthood they are to *offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. ii. 5.—6. 'Tis a kingdom of *kings unto God*, who are to *reign in life eternally by one*, to wit, *Jesus Christ*, who is *King of kings*, Rom. v. 17.; Rev. xvii. 14.; in him they are made *more than conquerors* over all their enemies, Rom. viii. 37.; and of their royalty and dignity, they sing to his praise, who is the author of it, Rev. i. 5. 6.—But, 7. However great the privileges of those of his kingdom are, they are taught never to forget what they are in themselves, to wit, sinful, unworthy and ill-deserving; having constant cause for the deepest humility, self-denial, and self-abasement; and that all their confidence and rejoicing should be in him, who, in the freest, richest love, at infinite expense, *redeemed them unto God*, and *bath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light*. —8. The state of this kingdom in this world is a suffering state; the afflictions of the gospel are universally, and in every age to be expected by those, who are of the true gospel of the kingdom. The King and Head himself *suffered* when in this world, and then *entered into his glory*, and it is a settled point in the grand plan, that the members shall be conformed unto the Head, and *drink more or less of the cup* whereof he drank; but it is also a settled point, that, *after suffering a while*, they shall then *reign in life with him for ever*, which must infinitely overbalance all that can be suffered in this world, and with that they are required in the mean time to comfort themselves, 1 Thess. iv. ult.

Such, in our view, is the nature, or internal constitution of this kingdom *not of this world*, in connection with its King and Head, upon whom it wholly hangs and depends. But it is about the external order and administration of it, that controversy is chiefly moved. In the former view of it, it consists of *real* characters as subjects thereof, and of such only; but in this

this other view of it, or as it appears in the sight of man, it includes *visible* characters as its subjects: so that such, as with true love profess soundness in the faith of Christ, and subjection to him, are to be received into it, or into the particular communities of which it consists in this world; and, while they live up to that profession, or exemplify the scriptural evidence of true discipleship, to the satisfaction of the charitable judgement of Christian brethren, who are in church-fellowship, they are to be continued, and to enjoy all the privileges of brethren in Christ.—Our view of this matter follows more particularly.

II. *Of the external order of Christ's Kingdom not of this world.*

This new and concluding dispensation of divine grace, commonly called the *New Testament*, and in Eph. i. 10. *the dispensation of the fulness of times*, and greatly celebrated in the writings of the ancient prophets, is, in distinction from the former dispensations, in a peculiar manner under Jesus Christ, the Son, by whom God hath spoken in these last days, by whom *grace and truth came*, and whom he hath set upon the holy hill of Sion as sole King there: in whom the things separated by sin, are brought together even in him, the common centre of their union; and particularly Jews and Gentiles are in him as their head, gathered into one church or body, Eph. i. 22: 23. and ii. 14. 15. 20. 21.

This dispensation opened when Jesus Christ having risen from the dead, sat down at God's right hand in the heavens, and had *all power in heaven and earth given unto him*, Mat. xxviii. 18. Then he sent forth his apostles into all the world to preach that gospel, which, as it was appointed, so was excellently fitted for gathering into his kingdom, and into one, those who were dispersed; and is called, *the gospel of the kingdom to be preached in all the world, for a witness to all nations*, Mat. xxiv. 14.

We are not to go back to the old dispensation, or order of the Jewish church, which is dissolved, to learn the manner of administration in a state of things which is declared to be *new*: nor to the manner of the kingdoms of this world, to learn the nature and manner of administration of a kingdom which is *not*

of this world; which they however having done, who formed whether the hierarchical or presbyterial plan, appear to us not to have clearly perceived the true nature of Christ's kingdom, and the true system of its order and administration, which is to be learned only from the doctrine of the apostles, and the manner of the churches settled by them, who were infallibly instructed upon that head.

Not a few are of opinion that the civil magistrate hath a power to settle whatever order in the New Testament church he judgeth best accommodated to the peace and interest of the state; that certainly is putting abundance of power in his hand, to say no worse of it. Others in love with exclusive power in churchmen, or loving riches, or both, have made out schemes of order, calculated for obtaining those ends; and though all such schemes bear striking features of a kingdom of this world, of which, however, Christ's kingdom is not; yet do all these authors attempt to support their respective productions by scripture: but it is easy to the impartial to see what violent stretching of Scripture they are guilty of, to give it so much as any appearance of serving their views. Whereas holy Scripture exhibits the true order in so many manifest declarations and plain facts.

It is intended to bring to the readers view, what appears to us the order in his house, which Jesus Christ the Son over it hath instituted by the ministry of his apostles; and to shew, as we go along, that that order only ought to be followed, and that the substituting any other in its room, is far from being innocent, or for the good of his house.

1. It may be observed in general, that as the law and order taught and established by the apostles, was perfectly well adapted unto the nature of that kingdom, which is spiritual, and not of this world, it interfereth not with the states and kingdoms there, and so it is not to change with any revolutions whatsoever in these kingdoms, but to abide unalterable in every period until he come again. Till then, his churches are expressly required to observe that; and that only which he hath commanded his apostles to teach, Mat. xxviii. 20. And this, among other things, that the members of his church are to be good subjects under every species of civil government where

where they live, and by which they are protected, giving no umbrage or ground of suspicion unto the same; are to be *subject to the higher powers*, to make *prayers; supplications, intercessions, and giving of thanks for kings, and for all that are in authority*; are to *obey magistrates*, and to *submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*, Rom. xiii. 1. &c. Tit. iii. 1. 1 Tim. ii. 1. 2. 3. 1 Pet. ii. 13.

2. The apostles having received their commission, and being in an extraordinary degree and manner endued with the spirit from on high, went forth every where preaching the word with boldness, with great power, giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, Acts iv. 33. the Lord giving testimony to his word by great grace remaining on all who believed, and by granting signs and wonders to be wrought by the apostles hands, Acts v. 12. The very first opening of their mouth was accompanied with the conversion of about 3000 Jews to the faith of Christ, notwithstanding of their former deeply rooted prejudice against him and his religion. They continued for a time preaching peace by Jesus Christ unto the Jews only; but after some time, the door of faith was by express commandment opened unto the Gentiles, upon whom also the Holy Ghost fell, Acts x. 36. 44. 45.; and xiv. 27. Glorious and wonderful in that period was the display of sovereign grace, by means of the gospel, or word of truth and righteousness, in its prevailing over all the united and utmost stretched effort and opposition of the invisible and visible powers of darkness, the infernal spirits and their visible agents, the mighty of the earth; the learned philosophers, with all their exalted pride of wisdom and sciences; the priests of all religions, finished masters in cunning and deceit; and the people, sunk in ignorance and superstition: in its prevailing over worldly interest, honour, pleasure, ease; over the carnal mind, and powerful self-righteous principle. It triumphed over all, 1 Cor. ii. 2.; 2 Cor. ii. 14.

3. When, in any particular city and neighbourhood, a number of persons received the word, they were baptized; and as, among other good effects the word had, it made them desirous of walking together in church-fellowship, the apostles ordained elders among them, chosen by themselves, Acts xiv. 23. and

also deacons so chosen, Acts vi. These two are the only ordinary office-bearers, whose character is described in holy scripture, to direct the churches in the choice of them, and whose work is particularly assigned, that they may know it; see 1 Tim. iii. 1. &c.; Tit. i. 5.; Acts vi. 3. 6. Such was the simple form of a gospel-church immediately under Jesus Christ its sole Head and Lord, and all in all to it. And such were the whole churches settled by the apostles every where, as it was the same gospel that they preached, Gal. i. 6.—9.; 1 Cor. iv. 17. and xiv. 23. The elders are sometimes called *bishops*, which is the same as overseers, Acts x. compare ver. 17. with 28. and Tit. i. ver. 5. with 7. Their work was to take heed unto, and feed their respective flocks, Acts xx. 28. They were to be *faithful, able, and apt to teach*, 2 Tim. ii. 2.; 1 Tim. iii. 2. were to *hold fast the faithful word* taught by the Apostles and Evangelists, Tit. i. 9. were to rule, *i. e.* were to lead, or go before the members in every thing excellent, and to moderate in church-meetings, as the word signifies, Heb. xiii. 7. 17. 24. So were to be, *not lords over God's heritage, but ensamples to the flock*, 1 Pet. v. 1. 2. 3. The Deacons were to be *men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom*, and appointed over the serving of tables, managing the church's funds, and particularly attending unto the necessities of the poor, Acts vi. 3. 5. 6. None appear to have been admitted into these churches, but such as received the word and professed the faith in a satisfying manner; but when that was done, they were baptized, and added; 3000 receiving the word, were baptized upon the day of effusion, and added to the church formerly consisting of an hundred and twenty.

4. These churches were gathered out of the world into the open and united profession of Christ's name and religion, solely by the word and hope of the gospel; they had no encouraging worldly views and prospects, to move them to embrace and profess the faith; worldly power, honour, riches, pleasure, ease, were all to be sacrificed; it being among the first lessons of their religion to deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow their Lord, whose kingdom they were carefully to remember was not of this world; and if they could
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not cheerfully yield and part with the things of this world, for his name, truth, and cause sake, they were declared unworthy of him; if they could not be satisfied with the better hope and the unseen things, it was vain for them to think of following him. They were fairly warned of laying their account with contradiction, reproach, tribulation, persecution; and were required to be willing to be as he was, whom the world hated, persecuted, and spoke all manner of evil against. And accordingly, as it was their belief and love of the truth and the better hope, that brought them together, so it was the same that kept them together, supported, and comforted them in all their tribulation, and enabled them to endure great signs of affliction, Heb. x. 32. &c.

5. These churches, it appears, met, each church by itself, upon the first day of every week, in commemoration of that most important event the resurrection of Jesus Christ the Prince of life from the dead, and to observe it as a day of thanksgiving and holy joy; that event carrying in it a most complete proof of the truth, and goodness of his religion, and consequently is a most interesting thing unto all Christians, and is worthy of a permanent, joyful remembrance. On the very day of the resurrection, the disciples being assembled, he came visibly into the midst of them, speaking peace, shewing them his hands and his feet, giving them joy, renewing their commission, breathing on them the Holy Ghost, John xx. 19. to 23. Being in like manner assembled the first day of the week following, and Thomas then with them, he again came and stood in the midst, speaking peace, satisfying Thomas as to the truth of his resurrection, and drawing from him an explicit and strong profession of his faith in him as his Lord and God, John xx. 24.—29. It is very probable they continued to assemble and he to meet with them every first day of the week, until he ascended; for all particulars are not recorded, John xxi. 25. which, as it encouraged, so it authorised the observing that day as the Christian Sabbath, and the calling it, in a way of distinction, *the Lord's day*, Rev. i. 10. The meeting of the members of the church of Troas, and of those at Corinth on that day, is so represented, as plainly shews it to

have been their stated and constant practice; and the way of all the churches was the same, as hath been shewed.

Upon that day the churches met. 1. For church or public worship, by praises and prayers unto God, Acts ii. 42. the infinite worthiness of the object having a most just demand upon them for the former; their constant great need requiring strongly the latter; and the new and living way of approach, the commandment to approach, and the promise of the Spirit, encouraging in the highest manner unto both.

2. On that day the doctrine of the apostles was taught and heard, Acts ii. 42. and xx. 7.; 2 Tim. iv. 2.; and when that doctrine was committed to writing, it was read also in the churches unto the holy brethren, who statedly met on that day, Col. iv. 16. and for the reading of which a most solemn charge is given, 1 Thess. v. 27. *I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren*; see also 1 Tim. iv.

13. A practice still highly meriting the church's observance. What can be so proper, so profitable to hear, as the lively, the divine, the infallible oracles; to drink at these very fountains of truth, or to hear the Holy Ghost himself preach? For though the scripture, now being in every ones hand, may be very usefully read in private, and ought indispensably to be much so read; yet it is especially profitable to read it after the whole church hath been joining in earnest prayer unto God, that saving instruction may be sealed unto them thereby.

3. On that day, and it would seem upon other occasions also, they met for having fellowship together in their gifts and grace, by brotherly and friendly communication together, so as they might partake in common of what each possessed; for besides private converse betwixt two or three, or a few, they appear to have assembled as a body for considering one another, to provoke unto love and good works, and to exhort and edify one another. It is certain they were so required, nay, it is likewise certain, that they so did, Heb. x. 24. 25.; 1 Thess. iv. 18. and v. 11. *Even as also ye do*. And surely as particular Christians have neither grace nor gifts for themselves only, but for the good of the whole body whereof they are members, each member ought to contribute that
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which is in his power for the benefit of the whole, as is the case in the animated natural body, which exhibits a most beautiful and a most instructive figure of what should obtain in a Christian church, who are said to be *members one of another*, Rom. xii. 5. ; See 1 Cor. xii. throughout, particularly ver. 25. 26. 27. and if that love and sympathy did obtain, which Jesus Christ requires among his disciples, they would find themselves strongly inclined to promote one anothers good and benefit in every appointed way ; would look upon it not as their duty only, but their privilege. And indeed the true way to improve both in grace and gifts, is in love to lay out what we have for our brethrens good : *to him that thus bath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly.* What good reason can be assigned why a brother, having the gift, may not pray in a church-meeting, as well as do it in what is called a *praying society* : or why an intelligent member may not, in the church-meeting, give his judgement as to the meaning of a particular scripture which is under consideration, as well as do it at a diet of public examination, and in a praying society ? Ah how unreasonable often, and how blind, is the attachment of many unto custom ! This most useful scriptural appointment is not only universally neglected in the national church, but is by many presumptuously and vehemently opposed, and by some profanely ridiculed. They stretch their invention for arguments to subvert a sacred a divine institution, muster up such objections as they can, many of them puerile enough, others apparently invidious : they injuriously figure a number of bad consequences, but false, or at least might, by due care, be prevented ; and are very active in playing them off as engines, to discourage and intimidate others, when it concerns them not a little to examine, if, at the bottom, it is not a blind attachment to custom, or if it is not the carnality of their minds, ignorance and want of love to the truth, and to Christian brethren : and particularly, if it is not the abominable pride of their hearts that awakens and rouses their opposition ; they not being able to bear the thought of being darkened by the superior gifts of others, who, perhaps, may be in inferior station and make less figure in the world than they. Self-denial is one of the first,

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most necessary and useful lessons in Christianity ; but how few learn it in any great degree, though, until it is learned, nothing can be done aright in religion. But how detestable is pride and selfishness, it is the bane of every society whatsoever, and especially of that which is religious : Do such well to be angry, and to have their eye evil, because the good and gracious Sovereign shews his goodness and his grace, in some instances liberally bestowing grace and spiritual gifts upon the more mean and low class of men, and who labour under many worldly disadvantages ? May not the Divine Spirit distribute what is his own to every one severally as he will, without their envying, murmuring, and reproaching, who, however, do themselves deserve nothing but what is evil ? Should not such a malevolent spirit be effectually curbed at its first appearance ? How exceedingly unlike is such a spirit unto that of Moses, Numb. xi. 29. *Enviest thou for my sake ? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them.* It is not the richest and greatest in the world that shine most in the spiritual kingdom, but the most self denied, and he who is most a servant unto all the rest, Matth. xx. 26. 27. and xxiii. 11. 12. As every member is but imperfect, and is liable to transgress ; if any gifted person shall be found improperly using his gift, he is subject to the correction of the church ; but surely his having a gift and using it properly, is a benefit unto the church, ought not to move the envy of any, but cause thanksgiving unto God by all. The members of the societies of this world very prudently meet and concert the carrying on of earthly schemes, designs, and interests. Is it wise, is it reasonable, that these who profess themselves children of light, and to be united in church-fellowship, should never once in all their life meet together as a body to confer about what is of infinitely more consequence than millions of earths and worlds ? Do such indeed believe the importance of the things which are eternal ? Men seem to be afraid of becoming spiritual and heavenly, so much are they occupied in the beloved pursuits of this present world, and so much in love with that dead and formal way, which allows them such full scope for that pursuit. It is argued by some, in opposition unto all this, that there
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were extraordinary gifts in the first churches, and so they who had them might exercise them publicly; but, as those gifts have ceased, that practice ought to cease with it. But how impertinent is such arguing, and at how much pains are men to argue themselves out of what is obviously both their duty and interest? Because extraordinary gifts are ceased, therefore we are not to exercise the ordinary gifts that remain: How wide from the point, and how unnatural is that inference? We surely are not bound to exercise extraordinary gifts, because they are withdrawn, we have them not; but it is equally sure, that each Christian brother is bound to stir up the gift that is in him, and use it for the ends of its being given him, namely, the benefit, the edification, the establishing of all his brethren, as he hath opportunity, especially when the reason of its exercise that way not only subsists, but increaseth. Is there not the greatest need for considering *one another to provoke unto love and good works*, when impiety and irreligion abound, and love waxes cold and is not? Are not all the means of godly edifying, and of spirituality and heavenliness, necessary, when the generality are become carnal and earthly to an amazing degree? Doth not the love, which brethren ought to have for each other, require them to do all in their power for helping one another forward in the Christian course? Is it the things temporal and seen, that should chiefly draw our attention, and occupy us, or it is not the things unseen and eternal? Miraculous and extraordinary gifts were for the sake of the unbelievers, and an attestation of the truth and goodness of the Christian faith, and so were most proper in that age; but Christianity having so greatly prevailed as it did, they became less necessary, and were gradually withdrawn. Yet the ends of ordinary gifts still remaining, they are continued, and most indubitably ought to be exercised: and the exercise of them in the manner holy Writ directs, in a dependance on him, *who hath received gifts for men*, would remarkably tend to the acquiring great acquaintance with holy scripture, and with bible-religion, which is far preferable to that which is traditional.

4. These churches were instructed to lay by them in store on that day, *every one as God had prospered him*, for the supplying the necessities of the poor brethren or saints, and particularly

cularly of the *widows indeed*, who were desolate, that there might be none among them that lacked, 1 Cor. xvi. 1. 2.; Acts vi. 1.; Acts iv. 34.; 1 Tim. v. 3. 5. 16. They were to give, *as a matter of bounty, not as of covetousness, not grudgingly, or of necessity, but cheerfully, knowing that God loves a cheerful giver*: and they showed great readiness, nay forwardness, of mind thereunto, by which they professed their subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and shewed their *labour of love* to God's name, 2 Cor. ix. 1. 5. 7. 13.; Heb. vi. 10. This was considered as a matter of great importance in that first period of the Christian churches, in which the Apostle Paul exerted himself in a particular manner; and seems, together with what is contained in the beginning of the preceding paragraph, to be included in the meaning of the *fellowship*, in which the church at Jerusalem continued stedfastly, as mentioned Acts ii. 42.

5. They came together upon that day for breaking bread in remembrance of Christ, and for shewing his death in the views of his coming again; this being the communion of the body and blood of Christ, it was the principal end why they, as one body, came together, for holding renewed communion and fellowship, with the Father and the Son, in the one great and sweet-smelling sacrifice, there represented by the one bread. They looked upon this as a most special part of the duty, which every such day required, 1 Cor. x. 16. 17.; and xi. 27.—29.; Acts ii. 42.; and xx. 7.; 1 Cor. xi. 18. 20. compared with 1 Cor. xvi. 1. 2.—The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are most intimately connected in the scheme of our redemption, as in the scriptural account of them; and are of the greatest importance unto all Christians: they therefore appear to take too much upon them by far, who audaciously separate these in point of remembrance, upon the day which is set apart for a joint remembrance of them, namely, the first day of the week, when they have, or may have, an opportunity of so doing, which certainly a church hath, when it is for hours met together upon that day. The first of the week is professedly observed among Christians, in remembrance of Christ's resurrection; but why not remember his death also upon that day, whereby our eter-

nal redemption was obtained, seeing the commandment to do
 so, is even more clear and explicit than is the institution of the
 other, *This do in remembrance of me*; and again, *This do ye in
 remembrance of me*, 1 Cor. xi. 24. 25. " But, (say many)
 " we do remember Christ's death on that day, in meditation,
 " reading, hearing, praying, praising." All quite right :
 But why except against that particular manner of remembering
 Christ, and shewing his death, which himself hath so plainly
 and clearly prescribed, namely, in partaking as one body of the
 one bread, and of the one cup? Say they again, " Christ
 " hath not commanded his death to be remembered in that
 " manner every first day of the week, and we think the doing
 " it so often, would be the being righteous over much." To
 which it is answered; he hath not indeed in so many words so
 required; but nothing can be more manifest, we think, than
 that his command, where he hath put no exception himself, is
 in the strictest manner binding upon his churches, when he
 gives them an opportunity in his providence of observing it,
 and when it doth not interfere with their lawful and necessary
 secular affairs: and a fair opportunity they have without that
 interfering, when the members are for hours together, as hath
 been noticed, upon the first day of the week. Besides, it hath
 been shewed, that it was a part of the order taught by his
 Apostles, who understood their Lord's mind, and was exem-
 plified in the churches settled by them. But doth such eager-
 ness to be excused from a weekly remembrance of Christ's love
 and death, in the manner commanded by him, and to invent
 arguments to justify the neglect they put upon this endearing
 commandment, really flow from a heart full of the love of him,
 which the heart of every Christian ought to be? or what doth
 it flow from? Do they speak truth before God, who hates
 infinitely all hypocrisy and lying, when, addressing him at what
 is called their *sacramental occasions*, they profess such high regards
 for the institution, counting it, as they then express it, an un-
 speakable privilege, to have the opportunity of commemorating
 the love and death of the dear Redeemer; to hear them then,
 one would think they would rejoice to have such an opportu-
 nity every day; but do their words then proceed from unfeign-
 ed hearts and lips, when in fact they reason with all their
 E might

might against a weekly observance, and satisfy themselves with once or twice, or perhaps some of them thrice in the year? What is the language of such ungrateful backwardness? Is it any great sign of high value for communion with the most blessed Author, and with Christian brethren in him; or that they have much experienced that communion? Is there not the same reason for remembering Christ in his own appointed manner, on the next first day of the week, that there was on the last, and so on to the end of life? Nay, does not the reason gather strength, seeing we ought to increase in love, and in shewing it by the most exact obedience in every thing. To the neglect, put upon Christ's precious order and command by many, and the loose and promiscuous manner of observance thereof, that almost universally obtains, is, among other things, owing the great want of that true Christian love and charity, which is *the end of the commandment*.

5. The right and power of applying the discipline was committed unto the whole church, and was not restricted unto the elders only; for, though they were to preside, propose, and moderate, they had not power to determine by themselves, and we find no instance of their claiming it. The epistles, which contained instructions with respect to discipline, as well as doctrine, were directed unto the whole church; any thing peculiar to the elder's office is particularly mentioned; and it was most reasonable the members should have interest in the matter, and be satisfied as to who should be admitted into, or continued in communion, considering the greatness of the love they were bound to exercise towards those who were admitted; but most professors of this age appear to have little or no sense of obligation in this respect; see 1 Cor. v. throughout; 2 Cor. ii. 7. &c.; 2 Thess. iii. 6. 14. 15.; Heb. xii. 15 16.; Rev. ii. & iii. chap.: And the reason being the same, what was the right and duty of one church was the right and duty of all. The point of discipline is of great importance unto the churches of Christ, and the managing of it aright requires much spiritual wisdom and prudence; much fortitude and zeal, much self-denial and impartiality; and, if it is not properly administered, the churches would suffer exceedingly. The scripture-directions are therefore most carefully to be attended
unto,

unto, and, among others, there is Matth. xviii. 15. &c. in a very particular manner. When the church gives a judgement in a particular case, all pains should be taken to shew its agreeableness to the rule of the word, that the consciences of those concerned may be properly touched, and, if possible, may be satisfied : for, if a church proceed not according to the direction of the Head, it hath exceeded its powers, and its sentence is null. Every church is to do as he hath commanded, and not otherwise.

6. These churches, being frequently and strongly required to be of one accord and of one mind, appear to have been unanimous in all their particular decisions, that we remember to have read, Acts xi. 29. 30. ; Acts xv. 1. 2. 3. 22. ; the struggling hard, and sometimes not very decently, to carry a point, if it was but by a casting vote, appears not to have been known among them, and indeed is not a thing very comely among those, who profess to assemble, and to act in Christ's name and in his sight ; and it can scarce be expected, that sentences, so carried, can operate any very agreeable effect upon the consciences of the concerned.

7. There was communion among those churches : each church received into stated communion the members of other churches, when they came to reside among them, and into occasional communion, when they had business among them, or in their neighbourhood, for a time ; and both, upon receiving proper credentials from the churches whence they came. The brethren at Ephesus attested Apollos to the churches of Achaia, Acts xviii. 27. The apostles, and elders, and whole church at Jerusalem, attested the goodness of the character of Silas and Judas unto the church at Antioch, Acts xv. The apostle Paul, whose testimony was equal to that of a church, attested Phebe of Cenchrea unto the church at Rome, Rom. xvi. 1. 2.

8. These churches were instructed, according to their ability, to maintain their elders, as well as make provision for their poor. They who were taught in the word were to communicate unto their teachers in all good things, Gal. vi. 10. ; see 1 Cor. ix. 1.—14. ; and we read not of any fault found with them, as being deficient in that respect. The richer churches con-

tributed also to the support of the poorer; and so we find contributions were made, even by very distant churches, for *the poor saints at Jerusalem*, Rom. xv. 26.

9. Holy salutation, expressive of mutual affection, and of their equality as brethren in Christ, appears to have been practised by these churches: as were other offices, expressive of their humility and self-denial, Rom. xvi. 16.; 2 Cor. xiii. 12.; 1 Pet. v. 14. &c.; John xiii. 14. 15.; 1 Tim. v. 10.

10. It is not improbable, that certain officers, and best qualified members might occasionally be commissioned from several neighbouring churches, to meet and consult about what did or might affect the interests of religion and of the churches, yet we do not read any thing particular upon that head; and nothing at all of such conjunct meetings their claiming or exercising any jurisdiction or authority whatsoever over the several churches.

11. One or more members from one church, visiting another church, to know its state, and if prospering, and to give advice if asked, or if needful, while no authority was claimed, was, it is very like, practised, and it cannot be justly objected unto, in any period of the churches. Love to the truth and brotherly love require it.

Upon the whole, we are fully of opinion, the Christian churches were in the greatest perfection in the apostolic age, that ever they have attained unto. If any are otherwise minded, let them point unto the period, wherein they judge they were in a more improved state, and let it be compared with the account which holy scripture gives of these churches, which were *in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ*. To talk of the then state of the church, as infantile, in order to give a diminutive notion of it, when the churches were set in complete order by the apostles, and which order they joyed to behold, Col. ii. 3.; and judged it fit to be settled in every church, 1 Cor. iv. 37.; and xiv. 33.; when the churches were under the Apostolic care and inspection, when there was a much more liberal communication of the Spirit than ever was experienced, and when a model was intended for all the churches in after ages, is certainly silly and unworthy of having

ing any answer made unto it. In one sense the apostolic church state might be called infantile, being only recently set up : but the case there was not as among men, who generally cannot bring their productions to perfection at once, but one improves upon another ; so that something more perfect comes out at length. The Author of the apostolic system of order is consummately wise in heart, and possessed of all *the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, every whose production and appointment is perfectly fitted unto its end, cannot be improved by men, though they may be, and are, improved by it. The churches then were not perfect in every respect under the instituted perfect order, sinless perfection being reserved for an after-state ; yet the apostles, who do not conceal their imperfections and faults, do in other respects say such glorious things of them, as no churches since can, in equal degree, pretend unto, as will appear to the careful enquirer, who makes the comparison. And indeed something grand and extraordinary was to be expected in the churches, in honour of the Head, as having then so lately sat down at the right hand of God. Certain it is, religion prospered more under that particular order and form, than it hath done in any instances where it hath been departed from, which consequently shews the fitness of continuing that order in the churches in every age. Men, in departing from it, and in settling any other in its room, do appear to invade his prerogative, who is the wise and gracious King and Head, and are far from doing any service to religion. — As we are fully persuaded, that the form and order of the churches, which the apostles received from the Head, is the best adapted that could be to the nature of his spiritual kingdom, and the promoting his religion : and as we are equally persuaded, that it was intended, and ought to be considered as a pattern or model unto all the following Christian churches, and that the rules and directions, prescribed by the apostles, are binding and ought to be observed invariably, until he come, and cannot, without sin and danger, be departed from, Matth. xxviii. 20. *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and lo I am with you alway even unto the end of the world. Amen.* We think ourselves strictly bound, accurately and exactly to follow that model, and observe these rules as we can

can perceive and understand the same, in preference greatly unto all the appointments and schemes of human policy whatsoever. A consciousness of following that, and that only, which Christ hath commanded, affords such peace of mind as cannot possibly be enjoyed by those who act differently.

But various things are objected unto the above form and order of the New-Testament church, and administration of the kingdom not of this world. To which it might be sufficient to answer, That if it is scriptural, if it is the institution of Jesus Christ, as we presume hath been shewed, all objections to it whatever must be groundless. We shall however offer a more particular answer unto such of them as are counted of most weight, by whomsoever they are moved,

I. A learned ministry is indispensably necessary unto the church; but, according to the above order, an ignorant ministry must inevitably be introduced.

Ans. I. As the churches of the above order are by settled principles bound to maintain their elders or ministers, why may they not find persons of liberal education willing to minister unto them in holy things, as well as do others who are not of the legal establishment? Such establishment is not essentially necessary to the well-being of the church, it was long before there was any such thing, and yet such a ministry was preserved, as under it religion flourished as much at least, as it hath done since. To this it will probably be replied, the way of other dissenters being more popular, the greatness of their number makes the burden easy to individuals, so that they can afford a pretty liberal encouragement, and consequently find more readily persons of education, disposed to come into the ministry among them. It is answered, That they who are lovers of the truth, as knowing its high value, which members of these churches must shew themselves to be, else cannot be members at all, look upon the support of the gospel, not as a burden, but a privilege; will therefore work diligently with their hands if needful; will retrench unnecessary charges as to other things; save what others lay out upon unworthy gratifications, that they may have to give for that support, and for other exigencies of the church. The Spirit
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still lives who ruled in the hearts of the saints at Philippi, who ministred so fully and so largely unto the Apostle Paul's necessities, Phil. iv. 10. 14, 15. 16. 18. and is promised to abide with, and work in and upon the churches. But,

2. What sort of learning is it that is so very requisite for the work of the ministry? Is it the wisdom of this world, which is foolishness with God? Is it philosophy and science falsely so called? Is it the knowledge of the fine and polite arts? Is great acquaintance with these and such like the qualifications which the sacred and infallible directory requires in an elder or overseer? Upon inspection it will be found to be much otherwise, 1 Tim. iii. 1. &c.; Tit. i. 5. &c. Aptness to teach is indeed one requisite: but what is he to teach? Is it not what the Apostles taught and preached? 2 Tim. ii. 2. *The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men able to teach others.* What was it that the Apostles taught and preached? was it not the gospel? was it not Christ crucified? *We preach Christ crucified*, 1 Cor. i. 23. which was *to the self-righteous Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks, the men of learning, foolishness.* Was it not the things of the Spirit of God, which are foolishness to the natural men however learned they are, they being void of spiritual discerning? Did not the Apostles manifest truth, the Divine truth? 2 Cor. iv. 2. and were not they made truly wise to salvation who duly received the knowledge and love of that truth? This is the true, the substantial, the saving knowledge and learning; while the *Lord knows the thoughts of the wise that they are vain*, 1 Cor. iii. 20. And so our Saviour's account of the New-Testament scribe or teacher, is not that he is instructed into philosophy and science, or what is called human literature, but *who is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven*, Matth. xiii. 52. bringing forth what himself hath learned from time to time, formerly or more lately, concerning that kingdom; for even scribes get not all their knowledge of that kingdom at once, but by degrees, as did the apostles themselves, who, however, were scribes most notably instructed unto that kingdom, Acts xxvi. 16.; John xvi. 12.; Acts x. 34. Human literature is of very great use when regulated by piety towards God, faith to-
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ward our Lord Jesus Christ, and real benevolence and love to mankind; but however much admired, applauded, and contended for, and however great it is, if there is no more, it turns out to be hurtful instead of being beneficial, rendering more capable of setting off error with advantage. It is also a very difficult business for those who have it, not to trust in it, its native effect is to puff up and swell with pride and self-sufficiency, than which there can be nothing more disqualifying for promoting a self-denying religion. Certain it is, that however much philosophy and human learning may have served other ends in life; yet since it hath become so much the object of study to qualify for the pulpit, and hath been so much mixed into the religious system, the simplicity that is in Christ, the truth as it is in him, hath suffered not a little by it; the pure gospel hath been corrupted and spoiled by foreign mixture, and rendered unfit for effectuating the noble end originally intended by it. It is a being divinely taught, a being skilful in the word of righteousness, the faithful word, and a having the gift of utterance, a faculty, in some measure, of fitly expressing sentiment, together with some degree of prudence and discretion, that truly qualifies for instructing, exhorting, and edifying men in religion; and for stopping by scripture-argument, the mouth of gainayers. To be a wise scribe in Christ's kingdom, one must be a learner in Christ's school, must himself receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, must unlearn many things and be a fool, that he may be wise in that respect, to which the literati, the men of learning, the subtle and acute reasoners and disputers, are, many of them, in no small degree averse: they admire their own wisdom, the wisdom of words, and despise the gospel, which is the wisdom of God. Our Lord's chief and most successful ministers were generally illiterate, for it is most true what is said, 2 Cor. i. 27. *God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, that no flesh should glory in his presence.* So unlikely were they to perform the work to which they were called, in appearance so unequal unto it, that they are figured by the children who joined in the song, *Hosanna to the Son of David*, and to whom the prophetic Psalm viii. was applied by our Lord himself, *out of the mouth of babes and sucklings*

sucklings thou hast perfected praise. Nor did they, after their extraordinary illumination, affect any thing like what is called polite literature. The only person among them of any liberal education, the Apostle Paul, declared the testimony of God, preached the doctrine of the cross, or Christ crucified, which, he said, was the only thing he desired to know among the Corinthians, 1 Cor. ii. 1. 2. not in a way of laboured language was this speech or preaching, or, as he calls it, *excellency of speech, and enticing words of man's wisdom*, which, whatever other end it may serve, is very little fitted to touch the conscience; but his speech and preaching was *in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*. Here it will be asked, Is not knowledge of the languages necessary in which the scriptures were originally written? We answer, That such knowledge of these languages as would qualify one for making out a more just translation than the present, would, doubtless, be greatly beneficial; but how few of the clergy, or of the elders of this national church, or indeed of any other, are better acquainted with these languages than were the translators; and yet with such clergy they are satisfied, the tide of whose zeal rises highest for a learned ministry: and if the clergy know no better than did the translators, they who have a true understanding of the English language, are upon a level with them. We are certainly indebted deeply to him who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, attending in the most careful manner unto their true and great interests, that we have such a translation, and the promise of the Spirit to guide into all truth, or into the meaning of the words of the book, so as to have the heart properly affected thereby. The first rate skilful in the original languages, admit our translation to be good, though not so perfect but some particular words and sentences might have been more fitly rendered. The Apostles made use of such a translation of the Old Testament as was then commonly used, although there were some inaccuracies in the rendering. The peculiarity of phrase or idiom in every language, is such, that, without a miracle, there could not be a translation of any language absolutely perfect; nor is such perfection absolutely necessary, as the import of the thing intended, may be sufficiently understood without it. The present translation re-

presents truth and holiness in a glorious light, and exhibits a scheme of doctrine and religion, altogether worthy of its Divine Author ; so that in conforming thereunto, there is assured safety. One therefore who is well acquainted with holy scripture, as we have it translated, and is capable of comparing and applying truth and directions as they stand there, being a man of piety, prudence, self-denial, and of dependence upon Divine grace, or who hath the scripture-requisites above pointed unto, is well qualified for being an elder, although he never had the opportunity of an university-education. But we admit, that the introducing one into the eldership who is a novice, raw, unexperienced and imprudent, who hath not good acquaintance with the holy scripture and word of righteousness, or gospel, who shews not a pious and self-denied disposition, and soundness in the faith, and who hath not in some measure the gift of utterance and elocution, would be most unaccountable, and greatly condemnable. We must however add, that, without entering into any debate about the propriety of teaching divinity as formed into a system by men, and as it is commonly taught in universities, we are come to be humbly of the opinion, that a Christian church properly formed, or according to the New-Testament plan, where the instructions of the Head are exemplified, is one good school wherein to be trained up for the work of the ministry. There the Bible learning is acquired, that is the system which, instead of every other, is there studied. To that fountain of truth, to that infallible oracle, immediate resort is had by all in a dependance upon the divine enlightening Spirit ; to the judgment there given, every appeal is made ; to its decision every one must stand. In such a church one hath opportunity of receiving all the light that all the church-members who are intitled to speak can give concerning that word, and by means of it. There one may improve, not only in point of doctrine, but witnessing a great variety of church-practice according to the word, with respect to discipline, may acquire great skill in the managing and conducting thereof ; which is a notable and most necessary qualification, and of vast benefit unto the church in the present imperfect state thereof : the church also hath good opportunity of being well acquainted with

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the gifts of the brethren serving to direct them in the choice of an elder or elders.

II. That in the above described order and administration of Christ's kingdom, no provision is made for preserving a succession in the gospel ministry there being no presbytery to ordain by prayer, fasting, and laying on of hands. We answer,

1. Although there is not a classic presbytery, yet when a church of the above order is completely organized, there is in it the only presbytery known in the New Testament, namely two or more elders, which are an eldership or presbytery.

2. Prayer in Christ's name is necessary and is required to accompany every other religious service, and it is in a particular manner necessary in setting apart, unto the ministerial office, and was used by the apostles, when *they ordained* presbyters or elders in every church, Acts xiv. 23. and with great propriety it continues to be used.

3. The reason also of fasting upon such an occasion, continues to subsist, and consequently ought carefully to be observed. But

4. It is not so clear, that laying on of hands is of equal necessity. In the most explicit account we have of the ordination of elders, which is Acts xiv. 2. 3. there is indeed mention made of prayer, with fasting, and of commending unto the Lord, but imposition of hands is not mentioned: And it appears now not easy to explain what is the precise meaning of it, since the once-accompanying communication of gifts hath ceased, that so it might be done in faith. It is, we conceive, the declared free choice of a church, together with the consent of the person chosen, that constitutes him their elder, *nuptias consensus facit*, i. e. it is consent that constitutes marriage. It is the part of elders to declare the election, and to be the mouth of the fasting church in prayer unto God for the blessing and success, and to commend unto the Lord who is believed in. If such elders as they have freedom to use, cannot be had by a church or worshipping society which holds the truth, they may proceed in their church meeting to make a choice of such to be elders, as they judge have the scripture qualifications, and if these accept, the thing is done. Prayer

with fasting ought to accompany this, and prayer for the blessing and success may be put up by one chosen for the purpose, and who hath a public gift thereof; for the Holy Ghost makes use of the instrumentality of men only as it can be had; and thus will a gospel ministry be continued, while there is a church to chuse it, and such there will be 'till Christ come. If such a process as this, and in such circumstances, is not sufficient, it will be extremely hard to shew that there is any one elder or deacon in all the churches called *protestant*. An unbroken line of succession from the apostles, conveying office-power, is impossible to be ascertained: that unaccountable doctrine, though it hath been contended for by certain Romanizing Protestants, as well as by the church of Rome, is now exploded among, and given up by all protestants, unless perhaps some high fliers of a certain church of protestant name. It is further to be observed that the reformers had no other ordination than that of the idolatrous church of Rome, then arrived at the summit of corruption and depravity, and in which faithful men had ceased: what signified the ordination of such a church? What had its idolatrous prelatists to convey? And consequently, what had such of them as embraced the protestant faith to give, that other christians had not? Notwithstanding of all the noise that is made about an order and line of men extending to this age, their having an exclusive power to ordain; and notwithstanding of all the zeal expressed in favour thereof, and weight laid by many upon it, it will be hard for them, we judge, to instruct that right, or to show whence it is acquired: long custom hath indeed established it upon the matter as a law, but like certain other customs, if properly examined and traced back, will, 'tis presumed, turn out not to be very well founded. If any however, will show that ordination by the laying on of the hands of a classic presbytery is essential unto the gospel ministry, we shall pay all due regard thereunto.

After all, there is in this order, which we offer to maintain, when complete, a presbytery, though not of the classic sort, to perform ordination, and consequently the above objection made unto it, falls to the ground.

III. The above order doth not carry in it any proper antidote against the springing up or coming in of error, nor make provision for purging the same, when the whole church or major part thereof fall into it. We answer,

1. Deficiency in that respect is less chargeable against that plan of order than any other; for as it is the love of truth by which the members are gathered into church-fellowship, having no external or worldly advantages to move them, and by which love they stand or are kept together, the first departing therefrom, in one or more members, will not readily escape the notice of those whose avowed principle it is to watch over and admonish one another, and not to suffer sin upon a brother: and as the departing from truth is the very unhinging of their constitution, who are gathered and kept together by the believed and loved truth in all its connection, the appointed discipline is sure to be early applied: And 'tis presumed it will be found fact, that erring from truth and from duty is more early discovered, and more severely animadverted upon in churches of the above form than any other, their very constitution leading unto it.

2. If the whole church err from the truth, then 1. Other churches of the like profession and order although they have not power or authority over the erring church, yet may reason and expostulate with the same, may counsel and advise, nay ought to do so: this is founded on that mutual love which should be betwixt such churches, a thing for which the church of the Thessalonians is commended, 1 Thess. iv. 10. and if the error is of the more dangerous kind, and the erring church proves obstinate in holding it, they may and ought to renounce brotherly correspondence with them, until they forsake the same, and return to the professing and holding of the truth; there is the same reason for withdrawing from a church as from a brother, when it walks disorderly and not according to what the apostles delivered.—2. As churches of the above form profess immediate subjection unto him, as their head, lawgiver, judge and king, who hath the sword with two edges, if they therefore depart from their allegiance, by forsaking truth and espousing error, they have reason to look for such resentment as that wherewith he threatened those of the church of Pergamos,

Pergamos, who held the erroneous doctrine of Balaam, and those also who held the erroneous doctrine of the Nicolaitans; *repent, saith he, Rev. ii. 16. or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.* He who walks in the midst of the candlesticks can correct and chastise in what manner pleaseth him; can reclaim if he see meet, Rev. iii. 19. Or he can unchurch them, *remove the candlestick out of his place, and spue them out of his mouth,* if they persist, as he first threatened and then executed against the church of Ephesus, and that of Laodicea, Rev. ii. 5. and iii. 16. Now this they cannot but know, and it must be of some influence to prevent their falling into error, or of recovering them when they so fall. But,

3. Where is that church-order to be found upon earth, which is an effectual preservative against error, or which infallibly secures the purging thereof, when it is fallen into? The subordination-plan cannot lay claim to this: there is in that order court above court; there is a last resort called a General Assembly of office-bearers, though in fact not a fourth part of these belonging to the church; but is this general assembly itself infallible, and unliable to error? are the leading members of it, who generally carry their point, always men who unfeignedly love the truth, and are valiant for it? Are they always men quite unbiassed in their conduct? The history of that court is appealed unto upon this head. Doth learning or parts, or doth power protect men against error, or preserve them upon the side of truth? Have not many such given in to the grossest error, especially in points of religion? Or, doth truth always owe its preservation unto numbers? Hath the exuberance of churchmen in the church of Rome, and its many numerous councils, preserved that church from manifest gross errors? Doth not the Confession of faith of the national church say, chap. xxv. "That the purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error?" One may adventure to assert, that a court of churchmen is as liable to err from truth, and through the pride of learning, parts and claimed power, as much disposed to hold it fast, as a christian congregation whose particular principle it is, in a dependence upon the grace of the Head, to keep in the closest manner by that word which is the truth, and to check the very first departing from it.

IV. This order is introductive of anarchy, disorder, and confusion; so, say the objectors, cannot be of him, who is *not the author of confusion, but of peace, requiring all things in his house to be done decently and in order.*

Answ. This is a stale objection, and much in every adversary's mouth; it is however a random groundless charge, without any thing solid to support it; churches of that form and order being far less liable to that charge, than are those whose pretensions to good order and regularity are very strong. For,

1. They are generally far less numerous bodies than other churches are, and it is easier to keep a few to order, than a great multitude.

2. Their order is simple and plain, and the more that any system or any thing is so, the less is it liable to disorder and confusion. While other churches abound, and also glory in canons, rules, forms, the product of human wisdom and policy, churches of this order have just the doctrine of the apostles, and approved order and practice of the first churches to attend unto, and by which to govern themselves, as they can understand the same? This they set before them without regard to the doctrines and commandments of men, or being influenced by any political views and considerations whatsoever. Many think there is no keeping churches to order, but by the power of churchmen, which, however, in its exclusive exercise is always unwarrantable, is often oppressive and tyrannical; and hence lovers of power in clergymen entertain a particular dislike of the congregational form. But they greatly misapprehend the matter. It is a sense of the love of Christ, and a being under the high but endearing authority which he exerts in and by his church, that influences the receiving of all his doctrine, the submitting to his discipline, and the observing all that order of his house, which he hath appointed in his word. *The love of Christ constraineth, 2 Cor. v. 14.*

V. Every one commences preacher. What crude, undigested, nay nonsensical effusions must there be? What pain must it give any sensible person to hear the same?

Answ. This charge is most unfair; it is also untrue. Only a few, two or three or so, according to the number of the members,

members, are chosen and set apart for exercising the office of elders, whose alone it is to preach, and their province is not to be invaded by any other, and they are to have full time and opportunity for discharging every part of their office in the meetings of the church. But, as the teaching of the Spirit by the word, the knowledge of the truth, and even the gift of utterance, is not confined to elders, but may in some instances be in as high, or even higher degree, in some members, why may they not express what they know, when the church is met for Christian conference and mutual godly edifying, if they do it in a decent, regular, and self-denied manner; for both what they say, and the manner thereof, is under the correction of the church, if there is aught amiss. And, as those of a church are expressly required to teach, admonish, exhort, and edify one another, to *provoke unto love and good works, doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus*, 1 Theff. v. 11.; Heb. x. 24. 25.; Col. iii. 16.; and as this was practised by the apostolic churches, Rom. xv. 14.; 1 Theff. v. 11.; the divine blessing may be asked and expected thereupon. Churches neglecting it, cannot be justified, as therein refusing to observe some important part of what Jesus Christ hath commanded to be done in his house for its benefit. The epistles, containing the commandment in this respect, were directed unto the churches, and were binding upon the whole members, where no exception was made. Women were not allowed to speak in a way of teaching in the church, but that implies the reserved right, and required duty, of the men. The church needs the use of every bestowed gift, and the gift of each is to be employed for the good of the whole, as being *members one of another*, and therefore to be exercised not in private only, but when the body or church is assembled, Heb. x. 24. 25.

VI. Of whatever rank or station one is, he is subjected to be judged and censured by every silly, mean, and beggarly creature in the whole church, which is a thing quite insufferable.

Ans. This shews itself to be no other than the folly of a proud unhumiliated heart, unacquainted with the doctrine and genius of Christ's religion, and that judges of his kingdom af-

ter the manner of the kingdoms of this world, where men are regarded according to their rank and property therein, or as they are possessed of the gold ring, James ii. 2. In his *kingdom not of this world*, men are to be regarded according to the resemblance of him which they bear, the regard they shew to his authority, and love to the truth; and it will be found, that those, who shine that way, however low their rank and circumstances are in civil life, will draw the esteem of those who are themselves lovers of Jesus Christ himself in sincerity. These objectors appear to have entirely overlooked or disregarded what is written, 1 Cor. i. 27. 28.; James ii. 5.; Philip. ii. 3.; and many such like scriptures. Jesus Christ does not allow them of his house to talk of one another in the strain of these objectors. Civil honour and respect is, by his law, carefully to be paid to men according to their rank and usefulness in civil life, and the transgressing thereof is censurable by the church; but church-members are to consider themselves as brethren in Christ, are to love at all times as such, not carrying disdainfully even to the meanest in point of rank, but in honour *preferring one another*, the higher *condescending to men of low degree*, Rom. xii. 10. 16.; thereby showing the power of divine truth over them. Christians are required to deny, and not to prefer themselves, but each other. It is certain, that some in low rank have, in spirituals, greatly excelled, and have discovered as great fitness and capacity for judging in that respect, as those who were much their superiors in civil life. And it is particularly to be remembered, that, when a church giveth a judgement, or censureth according to the law of its Head, it is his authority that is expressed, and so is to be regarded.

VII. All are rulers; who then are to be ruled? Is not this a most glaring inconsistency?

Ans. All are ruled; and, when the matter is rightly understood, there is not the least inconsistency. No lover of the order says, that all are rulers in all these respects that elders are, and that there is no distinction whatsoever; but every lover of the order will say, and justly, as hath been shewed, that elders cannot lawfully determine finally in the matters and

discipline of the church, without the consent of the church or body. Every delinquent, every accused person, is subject to the judgement of the whole church; but as soon as he is acquitted or restored, he recovers his right of judging others who are accused, or who become transgressors. In civil life, a bench of judges, however numerous, have each a right to judge; yet every one of these judges is liable to be judged by his brethren, if he transgresseth that law about which they have a power of giving judgment: and just so is the case here; there is therefore no inconsistency. This is a privilege that each church-member enjoys of being judged, not by subordinate courts, which costs a very troublesome and expensive process, but by his brethren in Christ, who are daily taught to love each other as they do their own souls, and who in the most solemn manner profess before God, angels, and men, that they do so love. This love will not indeed suffer sin to be unreprieved about a brother; that would be his loss, a great disservice done him; but it will never bring him in guilty, if his innocence appears, and it will be always most willing to find him innocent.

VIII. Several conscious it would seem of their inability to offer any thing of any weight against the order, chuse to put on a haughty and supercilious air, and think it enough to say, "It will never do." This, it must be owned, is a very short way of reasoning; but the authors must suffer themselves to be told, that such a bold and positive assertion will not be received, without something better to support it, than the credit of their understanding and authority; which is all the answer that such an argument deserves.

The above are most of the things we have heard of as objected. But, besides these open objections unto the order in debate, it would be good if there was no ground for thinking, that opposition unto it flows from other springs also than are avowed. As

1. That some are violently against it, who know nothing to any purpose of the matter, but like those mentioned by the apostles Peter and Jude, they speak evil of what they do not know nor understand: and indeed very few, if any at all, of
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the opponents; in our bounds, so far as we can learn, appear to have any true understanding thereof, or see this to be the precise order which is adapted to the promoting of that religion, of which Jesus Christ is the Author.

2. That not a few are against it, possibly because they see others are so, for whose judgement they have a great deference; and which they are so complaisant and obliging as blindly and implicitly to follow: to what a shocking degree doth this appear to prevail!

3. That many are so attached unto what tradition and a contrary custom hath established, that they are no more moved by clear scripture offered against what they hold upon that head, than if one brought a quotation from a romance. Ah! how strong, we had almost said, how invincible is the power of prejudice! Some of those under its influence do things now readily or even with forwardness, which, had they been proposed to them some time ago, would have filled them with indignation.

4. Numbers, great numbers, are for a way whereby their carnal things, their earthly property, and outward estate, will be preserved unto them entire: let come of the gospel and of poor saints what will, it matters not to them, being of a very different mind from our Lord when he said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*, Acts xx. 35. They are not at all for diminishing earthly property, but much set upon the increase thereof: and indeed the views of gain that way wonderfully open some peoples eyes, and serve to establish them in that, about which they were at the point of being shaken. It is to be feared, that not a few are for such manner of religion, as therein a consistency is held sacred betwixt *the love of the Father and the love of the world*; betwixt the *following of Christ* and *minding earthly things*; betwixt the *serving of God* and *serving of mammon*. If they are indulged as to the latter of these connections, they will not be unwilling to pay their respects in profession to the former. But they are so far from being reconciled to Christ's doctrine of self-denial, and of taking up the cross, and bearing it after him, that they shift it with all their might; are perfectly in love with worldly ease and prosperity, to which they make religion only

subservient, instead of sacrificing it to the interests of religion ; bless themselves in the wisdom and sagacity of their own conduct, and tacitly, if not openly, laugh at those who, looking beyond and above earthly things, decline to follow their example. O how much preciousness do some appear to see in this world ! and how little in Christ, his truth, his instructions, and state of glory !

5. Many cannot think of being subjected to the burden of the so frequent returns of so many spiritual exercises as are included in this order. While some of them pass the highest encomiums upon, and express the greatest regard for spirituality and heavenly mindedness, and for fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, they are for postponing the feeling and enjoying of it in any great degree, until they come to heaven : At present having other pursuits on hand, they appear to think it sufficient to preserve some decency, by keeping up a form of religion, however dead, and flowing from whatever springs.

6. Some appear too lofty to submit to the rigid discipline, as they take it to be, of Christ's house, and are for a way of much more scope and indulgence.

But while the adversaries of the order, whether openly or secretly, muster objections against it, and, though there is nothing in any of them, conclude it will near do, and so stand off themselves, and do what they can to discourage others, we being persuaded that it is his institution and appointment, *in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, whose love to his church is great to amazement, who is set over it *to establish it with judgement and with justice*, Isa. ix. 7. and who is *faithful to him that appointed him*, Heb. iii. 2. are fully satisfied that it will do ; that it is the wisest and the best, and very practicable when followed out in proper dependence upon its Author, who guides by his counsel, and gives power and strength unto his people. We have therefore found ourselves laid under the agreeable necessity to attempt, through grace, the conforming thereunto in every particular as it stands in the word, so far as we have an understanding of it, and in as far as it may be, by that word, made further known unto us. As Jesus Christ, the Son over the house, the King upon the ho-
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ly hill, perfectly knowing the needs of the house, hath taught and established a particular standing order therein; when so high an authority is interposed, it surely in the nearest manner concerns all to learn and know what that order is: for to set up one different, or submit thereunto when set up, must be greatly dishonouring, and consequently greatly displeasing to him, and to his Father who appointed him: it must also be dangerous and prejudicial exceedingly to the guilty. There are two errors which appear to prevail much in this day, an indifference as to whatever church-order is observed and followed, counting it a thing ambulatory and variable; on the other hand, the setting up and contending for an order different from what Jesus Christ, the righteous, wise, and gracious Sovereign, hath appointed. They who are truly wise will avoid both, will study to know, and then fall in with, that only which he hath taught.

We have the inward satisfaction of having been instrumental through the good hand of the church's Head upon us, in giving an opportunity to those of this country-side, of seeing with their own eyes, a church, though small, yet, in our best judgement, formed perfectly after that plan and model which the Apostles of our Lord received from him, and which was exemplified in the *churches which in Judea were in Christ Jesus*, in the *church of the Thessalonians which was in God the Father*, and in the *Lord Jesus Christ*, and in all the other apostolic churches, they being of the very same form and order. What some have done to discourage this measure, and to cause it miscarry, we shall not particularly say, whatever knowledge we have got thereof. Their own consciences, we are persuaded, will, sooner or later, tell them roundly of it. They are far from being objects of our envy, but much of our pity, and for whom we desire sincerely and earnestly to pray.

The attempt we have made, and the conduct thereupon of certain professors, of highest name and reputation, and who are thought to be something, hath given occasion to our discovering how much unacquainted they appear to be with the pure truth manifested by the Apostles, the pure, the unmixed, the uncorrupted gospel, and what strangers they are to the true

true nature of Christ's kingdom not of this world, and true order of his house. What happiness would it be to them to be duly sensible of their own case. May they at length be made liberally partakers of that Spirit who guides unto the knowledge of the truth, gives true peace, and also sanctifies by it.

A small number, yet greater than was once expected, being of one accord of one mind with us, have come into church-order together, under the blessed head to receive grace, and also law from him in every thing. We who hereunto subscribe, can challenge any to say, if we have used any other means of persuading, than just the preaching of that truth, by the manifesting of which the apostles commended themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, 2 Cor. iv. 2. and the shewing by the scripture the nature of Christ's kingdom, and order of his house. We most heartily despise that artifice and cunning, that flattery and sometimes threatening, and all these arguments from earthly views, which some use to get numbers or multitudes on their side.

The preceding is a true and genuine account of the state of our case, the reader is hereby warned to receive no reports disagreeing therewith. And the impartial reader will see if we have given cause for that abusive language in which we have been represented, and these floods of obloquy and reproach which have been poured upon us by those of a certain way; for there are not wanting such as approve of our conduct, although they have not the opportunity of joining with us. But it is the approbation of God, and in consequence thereof the approbation of our own consciences, that we account as of true and great importance, in comparison of which all other is nothing. To him, therefore, *who judgeth righteously* we commit ourselves and the cause which we have been endeavouring to maintain, being persuaded that it is his.

JAMES SMITH,
ROBERT FERRIER.

A P P E N D I X.

SOME circumstances, as we think, now rendering it necessary for us, in some measure to explain ourselves as to the particulars in the Westminster Confession of Faith, which we cannot subscribe as the truths of God, we shall very shortly lay before the public, what we think exceptionable in that Confession, and our reasons for so thinking.

1. Confession, chap. ii. section 3. it is said, “The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.”——We are humbly of the mind, that the incomprehensible mysteries of religion should be expressed in scripture-language only: These mysteries we are bound to believe, because of the authority which reveals them; but we think we are not at liberty to say more, or in another manner, of them than what is written. The above mysterious subject in particular hath been enlarged upon by some with a very commendable view, but by others with a view very different. We stand greatly in awe in speaking upon it, and our words shall be few. Without entering into a long disquisition as to whether there is a fitness in words to express, or a fitness in human faculties to perceive, how the Eternal Three are in one Jehovah, or are related among themselves in abstract Deity; or as to whether the appellations Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are, or are not oecomenical denominations, bearing a reference to the created, and especially the redeemed family. What we find ourselves diffculted about is to assert with the Confession, in this section,

1. That “The Son is eternally begotten of the Father.”——We believe that he who is called the Son is Jehovah, is God in the highest sense of the word, or is the Most High God, Jer. xxiii. 6.; John xx. 28.; Acts xx. 28.; Rom. ix. 5. But we find ourselves not at liberty to say, that he is eternally begotten; this mode of expression is not scriptural. He is indeed said to be

be the only begotten Son, several times in scripture, and he is said to be the only begotten of the Father; which is certainly true in these respects that holy Writ plainly reveals; but he is never said to be eternally begotten. A begotten Jehovah, a begotten Most High God appears to us to sound very harshly, unless taken in that sense wherein God is said to purchase his church with his own blood. It is not clear to us, that to be strictly eternal, and to be begotten by another are consistent; nor are we clear that self-existence, which must be essential to him whose name is Jehovah, is consistent with being begotten. We humbly think that either his being begotten as he is Jehovah or God, or his self-existence must be yielded; and if he is not self-existent, if he is not what he says he is, the I AM, he must have a derived or communicated existence, and it is easy to see in what rank of beings this would place him.

2. Much the like difficulties, which we shall not however resume particularly, do lie in the way of our asserting along with this section, "The Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son." We believe that the Holy Ghost is also God in the highest sense of that word, Acts v. 4. We find it said in scripture that he proceeds from the Father; but do not find it said, that He proceeds eternally from the Father; nor that he proceeds from the Son. It is indeed said, that Jesus Christ sends Him from the Father, that the Father sends Him in Christ's name, as also that the Father gives him. It does not however appear clear to us, that the terms *proceeding, sending, giving, coming*, which are applied to Him, are intended to shew the manner of his subsisting in Deity; but that they rather bear a reference unto the part that he acts in carrying the plan of redemption into full execution, as appears from the ends of his proceeding, &c. mentioned John xv. 26.; xiv. 16.; and xvi. 7. 13.

Such difficulties attend the representation given in this section of this mysterious subject that we find not freedom in our own minds to stand to our subscription thereof as founded upon and agreeable to the word of God.

II. Confession, chap. xiv. sect. 2. it is said, "The principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, resting upon

“ upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life.”——But to us it appears, that faith as it is in us (for in scripture it often means that which is believed) doth not consist in a train of mental actings, as above mentioned, and the like, which are indeed inseparable effects of faith, but are not so many ingredients in its precise nature. Faith is not a complex, but a very simple thing ; it is that knowledge which we get of a truth or fact by means of testimony, and is called faith on that very account. So saving faith is our knowledge or belief of the plan of reconciliation, and of God’s testimony concerning his Son, particularly, that he is well pleased in him, having raised him from the dead and given him glory ; which knowledge is the immediate effect of the light of God’s word of reconciliation shining into the mind, 2 Cor. iv. 6. ; Rom. x. 17. Thus belief and knowledge of the truth, are of like import, 1 Tim. iv. 3. So when a discovery is got of Jesus Christ in the light of God’s testimony, and record concerning him, it most naturally produceth a receiving, resting, and relying upon him for all salvation, as also the love of him and a willing subjection to him in every thing. But until his fitness and his appointment as the Saviour, is so discerned, which is the faith of him, these effects or consequences cannot obtain. For certainly the credit or belief of a truth upon testimony, and how we are affected by the truth believed, whether we are rendered happy or miserable thereby, &c. are different things ; so Psal. ix. 10. *And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee*, Psal. lxxxix. 15. *Blessed is the people that know*, i. e. believe *the joyful sound, they shall walk, &c. they shall rejoice, &c.* 1 Pet. i. 8. *Believing we rejoice.* It is viewing faith in this light that we can rightly understand these and like texts of scripture, Rom. iii. 28. Rom. iv. 16.

III. Confession, chap. xxiii. sect. 3. it is said, “ That
 “ the civil magistrate hath authority, and it his duty, to take
 “ order, that unity and peace be preserved in the church,
 “ that the truth be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies
 “ and heresies be suppressed, all corruption and abuses in
 “ worship or discipline prevented or reformed, and all the
 “ ordinances of God duely settled, administered, and obser-

“ ved.” We are quite at a loss to see from scripture that this is a truth of God, or that the civil magistrate hath any such power given him by God, in the kingdom that is not of this world. The proof from scripture in support of what is in the above section, appears to us to be wholly inconclusive; it is all brought from the Old Testament, and not a single quotation from the New. Indeed it appears to us that there is nothing in the New Testament which favours his having such a power. We are of opinion that the reasoning from the powers of the kings and governours in Israel, who were typical persons, and under a peculiar dispensation, to the power of Christian magistrates cannot be admitted. Whatever may have been the connection betwixt the church of God under the Old Testament and the civil powers, as the Old Testament dispensation, which was one very peculiar, is now over, and succeeded by another, a new dispensation, unless we can see the same, or a similar, or some certain kind of connection established between the church of God and the civil powers under this new dispensation, by him who had all power in heaven and earth given unto him by the Father, and who instructed his Apostles in the things concerning his kingdom, and authorised them to teach the world all things whatsoever he commanded them, we are no way safe to allow of such a connection. To pray for Kings and for all that are in authority; to be in subjection to the powers that are, yield all homage, all service, as good subjects to them, in as far as the members of a Christian church can do so, with a good conscience toward God, is most undoubtedly their duty: and to protect them, they behaving themselves as dutiful subjects, in the enjoyment of their natural, civil, and religious rights, is undoubtedly his. But with them, considered as members of a church of Christ, the civil magistrate, considered as such, seems to have no farther connection.

IV. In the same chapter xxiii. sect. 3. it follows after the above, “ For the better effecting whereof, he (viz. the civil magistrate) hath power to call synods, to be present at them, “ and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.” This is giving him power
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in God's church with a witness. Here he is constitute judge with the sword in his hand, not only of what is the true and pure worship of God, of the proper discipline, and as to how all ordinances ought to be settled administered and observed, and to suppress what he counts heresy, as in the former part of the section ; but he is constitute judge of truth and error, of what is, and is not agreeable to the mind of God. This, in our view, is giving him a very exorbitant and unwarrantable power. What is brought in support of it, at the same time, from the New Testament, is very weak, being only Matth. ii. 4. 5. Herod gathered together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, and demanded of them where Christ should be born. Can it be inferred from hence, that the civil magistrate, under the New Testament dispensation, hath a power to call synods, to be present at them, and provide, that whatever is transacted in them, is according to what he thinks the mind of God ? This doctrine concerning the power of the civil magistrate, with reference to the church of Christ, appears to us unscriptural, opposite to the spirit of Christianity, and inconsistent with the rights of conscience.

V. Confession, chap. xxx. sect. 1. " The Lord Jesus, " as King and Head of his church, hath therein appointed a " government in the hand of church-officers."——In so far as this, and the other sections of this chapter, put the power of church censures and discipline in the hands of church-officers only, to the exclusion of all the church-members, it appears to us neither a truth of God, nor founded upon his word. Our reasons for extending this power to the members in conjunction with the officers are contained, in the preceding representation.

VI. Confession, chap. xxxi. sect. 5. " It belongeth to " synods and councils ministerially to determine controversies " of faith and cases of conscience, to set down rules and directions for the better ordering the public worship of God, " and government of his church ; to receive complaints in " cases of mal-administration, and authoritatively to determine the same ; which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence " and submission, not only for their agreement with the

“ word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as
 “ being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in his
 “ word.”——That synods, or councils of ministers of
 Christ, may meet and consult as to what pertains to the com-
 mon cause of truth and religion, is not denied; but that they
 have a power by themselves to determine, as above in this
 section, controversies of faith, cases of conscience, &c. we
 cannot see authorised by the word of God. We are thorough-
 ly convinced, that the scriptures brought in proof of the a-
 bove section, prove the contrary, when the whole text is quo-
 ted, Acts xv. ; Acts xvi. ; Matth. xviii. 17. ; and we cannot
 see a church court of any kind in all the New Testament ac-
 cording to the common acceptance of that word.

Besides what is contained in these sections of the Confession
 of Faith, which we have objected unto, as not founded upon,
 and agreeable unto, the word of God, there are several o-
 ther expressions in that Confession, with which we are not ful-
 ly satisfied, as authorised by that word. But having already
 enlarged so much, we shall forbear mentioning particulars.



F I N I S,

E R R A T U M,

Page 13, line 4, for III. read 5.

